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Pope Alexander VI as Patron: The Style and Significance of the Borgia Papal Frescoes

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Pope Alexander VI as Patron: The Style and Significance of the Borgia Papal Frescoes

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Abstract

Alexander VI as Patron: The Style and Significance of the Borgia Papal Frescoes

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In 1492, Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia ascended the throne of St. Peter as Pope Alexander Sextus. Later that same year, Alexander commissioned Perugian artist Bernardino di Betto—more commonly referred to as Pinturicchio—to paint a series of frescoes for Alexander's new papal apartments, which comprised of six rooms. Pinturicchio's frescoes are astonishingly lavish, having been richly appointed with brilliant colors, *pastiglia*, and a generous amount of gold leaf. This splendor made a very specific statement about Alexander; it heralded his personal wealth and power, and sought very pointedly to dazzle and even overwhelm viewers. Scholars often discuss this sumptuousness in relationship to the suite's iconography, which echoes the style in emphasizing Alexander's importance, both as sacred and a secular leader. However, as early as the seventeenth century, critics of both Alexander and Pinturicchio ascribed the suite's lavishness to a poor taste on Alexander's part and lack of skill on Pinturicchio's. This supposition was often presented in conjunction with Alexander's reputation, both in his own time and throughout the succeeding centuries of scholarship, as a politically-minded

pope unlearned in humanism or the arts. Despite his successful career, Pinturicchio's style was posthumously perceived to be retardaire, and he was unfavorably compared to contemporaries like Raphael, who embodied what scholars felt was a more purely "Renaissance" style.

In this thesis, I seek to disprove these notions. Pinturicchio's Borgia style reflects elements from the International Gothic style that dominated European courts a generation earlier, a style lauded by humanists for its imitation of nature and rich detail. In exploring the relationship between Pinturicchio's work and those of International Gothic artists, I will suggest that Pinturicchio's style would also have delighted humanist viewers.

I will also discuss the ways in which the Pinturicchio's Borgia style coincides with rhetorical theory. The revival of Classical rhetoric lay at the heart of Renaissance humanism, and Renaissance art criticism reflected rhetorical theory as a result. Art was thus judged on its ability to translate these oratory practices into physical form, essentially creating visual arguments ultimately aimed at persuading viewers. This is very much the case in Pinturicchio's frescoes. I will point out the ways in which his work successfully incorporated rhetorical elements that would have been understood and appreciated by learned viewers. I will also discuss the way in which scholars perceive Alexander's legacy in an effort to demonstrate that he too understood and appreciated the complexity of Pinturicchio's style. Overall, I argue for the ultimate success of Pinturicchio's visual argument and suggest by association that Alexander was a man who understood and exploited the power of art. In doing so, I seek to re-contextualize Alexander's artistic legacy.

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Chapter One: *Damnatio Memoriae*: Re-contextualizing Alexander VI's Papal Apartments

Between 1492 and 1494, Pope Alexander VI (1492-1503)—born Rodrigo Borgia— commissioned Perugian painter Pinturicchio to complete a series of frescoes in Alexander's papal apartments. The apartments, which were built by Pope Nicholas V in the 1450s, remained bare and unadorned until Alexander's ascension to the throne of St. Peter in 1492.[1]The Borgia apartments comprise six rooms, the majority of whose frescoes remain in excellent condition. They include: The Room of Sibyls and Prophets, The Room of Prophets and Saints, the Room of Liberal Arts, The Room of Lives of the Saints, and The Room of Mysteries of the Faith. Pinturicchio's *all'antica* style of painting and lavish use of ornament echoes what the apartment's iconographic program also seeks to suggest: Alexander, despite his Spanish heritage, was an exemplar of *romanitas* and consequently well-suited to be ruler of Rome.

However, Pinturicchio's lavish frescoes reveal more about Alexander than merely his political goals. Upon inspection, they are intricate and complex, reflecting a sophistication of thought that would have specifically appealed to erudite viewers. Pinturicchio's use of ornamentation and Classical motifs does more than evoke the power of Imperial Rome. The frescoes' style reflects aspects of Classical and contemporary rhetoric, making them a visual manifestation of tenets followed by Renaissance Humanists. This sophistication reflects back on Alexander, and through careful study we may understand that his appreciation for Pinturicchio's works is likely an indication of his own erudite sensibilities.

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1 Eugène Müntz, *Les Arts À La Cour Des Papes Pendant Le XVe Et Le XVIe Siècle: 3 Vol. En 1 Vol.* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1983), 204.

I will discuss the link between Pinturicchio's Borgia style and rhetorical theory in much greater depth in the following chapter. However, it is first important to understand how history and art history have dealt with both artist and patron. The Florentine Niccolò Machiavelli, author of the Cinquecento political treatise *The Prince*, was perhaps the most succinct in summing up Alexander's contemporary reputation. Machiavelli mentions Alexander in his poem "Decannale Primo", which was published in 1503, the year of Alexander's death, and which chronicled the previous ten years of Florentine affairs.[2] Machiavelli writes of Alexander, "the soul of the glorious Alexander, that it might rest, departed to the blessed spirits; his sacred footsteps were followed by his three dearest handmaids: luxury, simony, and cruelty."[3]

Alexander was criticized for having gained the papacy through simony, his lecherous behavior, the shameless promotion of his illegitimate children, and his naked political ambitions, most specifically his attempt to carve out a secular Borgia state within central Italy. Furthermore, despite the substantial commissions of the Borgia frescoes as well those inside the Castel Sant'Angelo—which have now regrettably been lost—Alexander was considered to be a pope wholly uninterested in the arts, both during his pontificate and in the ensuing centuries of scholarship. In his book *The Borgias: The Rise and Fall of a Renaissance Dynasty,* Michael Mallett explains that Alexander was often unfavorably compared to other Renaissance Popes as patrons. In contrast with popes like Nicholas V and Sixtus IV, he was considered lacking in cultural appreciation.[4]

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2 Niccolò Machiavelli, *Chief Works, and Others*, ed. Allan H. Gilbert, vol. III (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1965), 1444.

3 lines 169-71, 463, 442-7

4 Michael Edward Mallett, *The Borgias; the Rise and Fall of a Renaissance Dynasty* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1969), 234.

Though I will argue the opposite in my chapter on the sophistication of Pinturicchio's Borgia frescoes, Mallett contends that Alexander was a man who valued visual pleasure more than intellectual content, citing the sumptuousness of the Borgia frescoes as proof.[5] Mallett relies on Ludwig von Pastor's *History of the Popes* as a reliable source of evidence. Pastor's careful accounts of the fifty-six pontificates between Clement and Pius IV is considered a seminal source on Papal history. Like others, Pastor does not see Alexander as a pope interested in either art or intellectual endeavors. Mallett also relies on Eugène Müntz's *Les arts à la cour des Papes Innocent VIII, Alexandre VI, Pie III*. Müntz suggests that the extent of Alexander's artistic endeavors was to amend or supplement the work of his predecessors. While the Borgia frescoes do share visual similarities to works commissioned by both Nicholas V and Sixtus IV, Pinturicchio's frescoes are in many ways innovative and distinct. However, Mallett's contention that Alexander privileged splendor of stylistic or intellectual merit indicates that modern scholarship, despite having re-contextualized Alexander from a villain to a politician, still does not consider as a patron or an intellectual of the same caliber as his Renaissance contemporaries.

Pinturicchio, despite enjoying a prosperous career with commissions by many prominent patrons, was similarly criticized after his death. In his *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, first published in 1550, biographer Giorgio Vasari has this to say of Pinturicchio:

> It is common knowledge that Fortune adopts as her children those who depend on her without the help of any talent, for she likes to raise up some with her own favor who never have been recognized through their own worth. This is what happened to Pinturicchio from Perugia, who, even

5 Mallett, M. *The Borgias,* 234.

> though he executed many works and was assisted by many people, nonetheless enjoyed a much greater reputation than he deserved.[6]

Vasari's harsh critique of Pinturicchio's work foreshadowed a greater trend within art criticism in which ornate styles like Pinturicchio's were considered retardaire and antithetical to the Renaissance ideals of purity and rationalism first defined by architect Leon Battista Alberti. This judgment was in turn reflected back on patrons, and Vasari suggested that viewers who enjoyed highly ornamented works were uneducated in their artistic taste. He writes, "in his painting, Bernardino[7] frequently employed golden ornaments in relief to satisfy those who understood very little of this craft, so that they would be gaudy and lustrous, something which is an extremely crude device in painting."[8] Vasari makes this comment in specific reference to Pinturicchio's Borgia frescoes, suggesting by extension that Alexander was one such patron.

ALEXANDER'S REPUTATION

One of the first challenges one faces when trying to understand Alexander's artistic legacy is his unfavorable contemporary reputation. Machiavelli was by no means alone in his intense dislike of Alexander. Upon his election, the Roman notary Latinus de Masiis commented, "Oh, Lord Jesus Christ, it is in punishment for our sins that Thou hast permitted Thy vicegerent to be elected…"[9] Contempt for Alexander only grew as his pontificate continued, and despite his improvements to the city of Rome, it seems he was

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6 Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*, trans. Julia Conaway and Peter E. Bondanella (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 250.

7 Pinturicchio's given name was Bernardino di Betto. The nickname Pinturicchio means "Iittle painter"

8 Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*, trans. Julia Conaway and Peter E. Bondanella, 253.

9 Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages. Drawn from the Secret Archives of the Vatican and Other Original Sources*, ed. Frederick Ignatius Antrobus, vol. V (London: Broadway House, 1950), 389.

vehemently disliked by the Roman public and many within the curia. In his book *The Life and Times of Rodrigo Borgia, Pope Alexander VI,* twentieth-century biographer Bishop Arnold Mathew points out, "the populace hated Alexander with a deadly loathing…the fact that Rodrigo Borgia was permitted to occupy the throne of St. Peter's for ten years speaks to the remarkable strength of the early Renaissance papacy."[10]

As noted, one of the crimes for which Alexander was most reviled was his use of simony and bribery to earn the votes he needed to be elected pope. By the conclave in 1492 Alexander had served thirty-five years as Vice-Chancellor of the Holy Roman church, a position sometimes considered "the second papacy".[11] In that time, Alexander had been second only to the pope in his power, and with that power came considerable wealth. He held a number of important bishoprics in both Italy and Spain, all of which generated income. By 1492, Alexander was considered the richest of the cardinals, as evidenced by his sumptuous Roman palazzo. The palazzo—which is now the palazzo Sforza-Cesarini—was built sometime between 1458, when Alexander purchased the land from his uncle Pope Calixtus III, and 1484, when Ascanio Sforza wrote a letter to his brother Ludovico Il Moro describing the palazzo's splendor. Sforza writes:

> The palace is splendidly decorated; the walls of the great entrance hall are decorated by tapestries depicting various historical scenes…the carpets on the floors harmonized with the furnishing, which included…a chest of gold on which was laid out a vast and beautiful collection of gold and silver…"[12]

The palace was sometimes referred to as the Palazzo della Cancelleria, so-named for Alexander's position as Vice-Chancellor. It should not, however, be confused with

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10 Arnold Harris Mathew, *The Life and times of Rodrigo Borgia, Pope Alexander VI* (New York: Brentano's, 1912), 383.

11 Georgina Masson and Marion Johnson, *The Borgias* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1981), 150.

12 Pastor, L., *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Age,* vol V, 166-7

that of Cardinal Raffaele Riario, who served as Camerlengo to his uncle Sixtus IV. Construction on Riario's palace, which was also referred to as Palazzo della Cancelleria, began in 1489.[13] When Alexander was elected in 1492, his palace did indeed pass to the next vice-chancellor, Ascanio Sforza. Sforza was, at one time, considered one of the forerunners for the papacy following Innocent VIII's death, along with Alexander and Cardinal Guiliano della Rovere, later Pope Julius II. [14] However, Sforza withdrew after the first vote and subsequently backed Alexander, for which he was awarded the esteemed position of vice-chancellor. This was, without question, one of Alexander's more blatant instances of simony. Of course, though Alexander was particularly vilified for his sale of church offices, he was by no means alone in this practice. Julius II, Alexander's most vociferous detractor, was also accused of simony. Julius allegedly appointed cardinals in exchange for valuable church offices, which he then resold to the highest bidder.[15] Julius also invented new positions that he could sell, and he created over two hundred offices over the course of his reign.[16]

In addition to his alleged crimes, Alexander was also a victim of the growing xenophobia in late Quattrocento Rome. Though he spent most of his adult life in Italy and was educated at The University of Bologna, Alexander and his family were always considered outsiders. They originally came from Jativa, Spain, where they could proudly trace their nobility back to Esteban de Borja, who aided King James I of Aragon in his successful campaign against the Moors in the first half of the Duecento.[17] In exchange for

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13 Georgina Masson, *Italian Villas and Palaces* (S.l.: Thames & H., 1966), 169.

14 Masson, G. Marion Johnson, *The Borgias*, 150.

15 James Corkery and Thomas Worcester, eds., *The Papacy since 1500: From Italian Prince to Universal Pastor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 20.

16 Peter Partner *The Pope's Men: The Papal Civil service in the Renaissance*, 138

17 Mallett, M. *The Borgias,*60.

their loyalty James gave the Borjas the land around Jativa, which they made their ancestral seat. They were aristocrats of modest wealth, and although Alexander's success in Rome did result in a dramatic augmentation of their family fortune and prestige, the Borjas were neither the nouveau-riche social climbers nor robber barons they were sometimes accused of being in Italy.[18]

The Borjas, which Calixtus—Alexander's uncle and the first Borgia pope—Italianized to Borgia, were also often accused of having *marrono* blood. In Spanish, this term referred to "Christianized Jews", and was alternately a slang term for "dirty" or "pig".[19] Italians, like the Spanish and the Portuguese, found marranos undesirables. The idea that Alexander was harboring Marrano blood, despite the Borjas ability to trace their lineage back to the Duecento, often made him the recipient of vitriolic scorn.

Indeed, this sort of xenophobia also made its way into the College of Cardinals, and the latter half of the Quattrocento saw a marked increase of Italians in the College. In the 1455 conclave in which Calixtus was elected pope, eight of the fifteen cardinals were non-Italians.[20] The foreign majority within the College prevented an Italian monopoly on the papacy. However, by the time Alexander was elected in 1492, only two of the twenty-three cardinals—a mere eight percent—were non-Italians. This uneven distribution of power may explain, in part, why Alexander so vigorously sold both church offices and personal property; without appealing to the cardinals' greed, he would likely have been crushed by the Italian majority.

However, while the xenophobic nature of Renaissance Rome certainly did not help him, it cannot be said to be the leading contributor to Alexander's unfavorable

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18 Mallett, M. *The Borgias,*60.

19 Cecil Roth, and Irene Roth (1974), *A history of the Marranos* (4th ed.), New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 74

20 Mallett, M. *The Borgias,*54.

reputation. As mentioned, Alexander's harshest critic was his long-time opponent Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, who ascended the throne of St. Peter as Julius II on the first of November in 1503, a mere seventy-eight days after Alexander's death. Even before the papal election in 1492, Guiliano and Rodrigo were bitter rivals. One account by Mantuan envoy Antonello da Salerno alleges that Giuliano and Rodrigo bitterly fought even as they sat vigil at the dying Innocent's deathbed.[21] Giuliano contempt for his rival only grew with Alexander's election, and from the very beginning of his pontificate, he dedicated considerable effort to destroying Alexander's legacy.

ALEXANDER AND POPE JULIUS II

After his election, Julius wasted no time; he immediately launched an appropriately Classical *damnatio memoriae* against Alexander. *Damnatio memoriae*, which in Latin quite literally means "damnation of memory", was a practice from ancient Rome that dictated that a person must not be membered. It was often brought upon those who were perceived to have brought dishonor to the Roman State, usually emperors or societal elites after their death.[22]

The term *damnatio memoriae* is a modern one and not used by the Romans, but its practice was at the center of Roman politics. In fact, the Latin word *memoria* encompasses more than its English cognate memory. It also described someone's cultural identity, reputation, and legacy. In effect, a *damnatio memoriae* was a practice that truly sought to destroy a person's essence of being.[23] This is certainly what Julius endeavored

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21 Masson, G., and Marion Johnson *The Borgias,* 151.

22 Eric R. Varner, *Mutilation and Transformation: Damnatio Memoriae and Roman Imperial Portraiture* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1.

23 Varner, E. *Mutilation and Transformation: Damnatio Memoriae and Roman Imperial Portraiture*,2.

to do with Alexander. After Alexander's death and his own ascension to the throne of St Peter's, Julius wrote:

> He [Alexander] desecrated the Holy Church as none before. He usurped the papal power by the devil's aid, and I forbid under the pain of excommunication anyone to speak or think of Borgia again. His name and memory must be forgotten. It must be crossed out of every document and memorial. His reign must be obliterated. All paintings made of the Borgias or for them must be covered over with black crepe. All the tombs of the Borgias must be opened and their bodies sent back to where they belong—to Spain.[24]

For all Julius's grand proclamations of Alexander as an enemy of both the state and the common good, his hatred of Alexander was also intensely personal. Like Alexander, Julius had bid for the throne in Saint Peter's in 1492, and when he lost to Alexander, he was furious at being bested by a Catalan he felt had gained the papacy through venality. Julius also spent the duration of Alexander's reign in exile, and his plan to ally himself with Charles VIII of France to invade Rome and depose Alexander in 1494 utterly failed. Beyond the prudent political strategy to distance himself from the much-hated Borgia papacy, Julius's damnation of Alexander's memory allow him an opportunity to destroy the essence of a personal enemy.

Whether more personal or political, Julius's efforts have had a lasting effect on the way in which Alexander's legacy was perceived. Julius's *damnatio memoriae* also largely robbed Pinturicchio's frescoes of context or relevance. Renaissance scholar Jonathan B Reiss explains that art historians have often considered Julius's abandonment of the Borgia apartments a consequence of personal taste, suggesting that that Julius intensely disliked the sumptuousness of Pinturicchio's frescoes and preferred Raphael's

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24 Nigel Cawthorne, *Sex Lives of the Popes: An Irreverent Exposé of the Bishops of Rome from St Peter to the Present Day* (London: Prion, 1996), 219.

purer, less ornamented style.[25] Reiss continues by explaining that the style and iconographic program of Raphael's Stanze have traditionally been deemed "antithetical" to the "retrograde" style and scholastic thought in Pinturicchio's frescoes.[26] However, as Reiss points out, Pinturicchio and Raphael were both students of Perugino and share Umbrian stylistic roots. By comparing the two apartments, as he does in his article "Raphael's Stanze and Pinturicchio's Borgia Frescoes", Reiss instead suggests that Julius's decision to abandon the Borgia apartments was politically motivated. Reiss explains that as late as 1512, almost ten years into Julius's pontificate, he was still hosting state dinners in Alexander's sumptuously appointed apartments.[27] Thus, Reiss reasons, Julius was not so much opposed to Pinturicchio's style as he was Alexander's legacy, and it was for this reason he had his own apartments built.

In his book *Patronage and Dynasty: The Rise of the della Rovere in Renaissance Italy,* Ian Verstegen makes a similar argument. Verstegen explains that Julius was also seeking to distance himself from Alexander's pontificate, and the construction and decoration of his own apartments symbolically represented this separation.[28] Despite the fact that Pinturicchio had enjoyed many prominent commissions throughout Rome, including several frescoes for the della Rovere family, his legacy was dominated by his Alexandrine works. Given this strong association with Alexander, Pinturicchio became an artist whose style had no place in the new era Julius sought to usher in. By the end of the Cinquecento, just as the Borgia pontificate was a thing of the past—a legacy not

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25 Jonathan B. Reiss, "Raphael's Stanze and Pinturicchio's Borgia Apartments," *Notes on the History* 3, no. 4 (Summer 1984): 57.

26 Reiss, J. "Raphael's Stanze and Pinturicchio's Borgia Apartments", 57.

27 Here Reiss cites Julian Klaczko's 1903 *Rome and the Renaissance: The Pontificate of Julius II*, page 59

28 Ian Verstegen, *Patronage and Dynasty: The Rise of the Della Rovere in Renaissance Italy* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2007), 57.

worth emulating or even remembering—Pinturicchio's style was largely considered retardaire and was all but forgotten. This reality was underscored by the fact that Julius had the apartments closed after his own were finished, and they were not reopened until 1897, nearly four hundred years later.[29] In this way, Pinturicchio's frescoes were victims of Julius's *damnatio memoraie*.

CALIXTUS III AND THE FIRST BORGIA PONTIFICATE

To understand Alexander's pontificate and his capacity as a patron of the arts, it is useful to understand the papal dynasty of which he was a part. It began with Alexander's uncle. Born Alfonso Borgia, he was elected pope in 1455 and became Calixtus III. Calixtus provides a good point of comparison for Alexander, because he truly represents a pope uninterested in humanism. In many ways, Calixtus was a late medieval pope consumed by late medieval concerns. Calixtus may only really be considered a Renaissance pope in his practice of nepotism, which extremely common among popes of the late Quattrocento. Biographer John Fyvie noted that within a month of his coronation, Calixtus elevated three nephews in particular: Pedro Luis and Rodrigo Lançol and Luis Juan de Mila.[30] Calixtus seemed to particularly favor Rodrigo, whom he made a cardinal in 1456. Calixtus allegedly sought to keep this expedited elevation a secret, and scholars have interpreted this to mean that Calixtus feared many would see this as a flagrant violation of the promise he had made upon his election to serve only the Church's interests and not his own.[31]

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29 Corrado Ricci. *Pinturicchio: His Life, Works, and Times*. Lippincott, 1902, 87-90.

30 John Fyvie, *The Story of the Borgias* (London: E. Nash, 1912), 54.

31 Fyvie, J. *The Story of the Borgias,* 54.

Calixtus is sometimes considered a compromise pope. The non-Italian cardinals at the conclave wanted a crusader pope like him, and the Italians seemed willing to accept someone older perceived to be above party factions.[32] In this regard, Alfonso was a natural choice, and he dedicated his energies quite vigorously to revitalizing the fight against the Ottoman Turks, who had conquered Constantinople in 1453. Calixtus was also considered to be immune to flattery and corruption,[33] and, aside from his practice of nepotism, this seems to be the case. At any rate, he was wholly devoted to his role as a crusader pope. In his *History of the Popes*, Pastor expounds on Calixtus's rather singular goal, saying:

> Except for his nepotism, Calixtus III deserves high praise, more especially for the energy, constancy and purpose that he displayed in dealing with the burning question of the day -- the protection of Western civilization from the Turkish power. In this matter he gave a grand example to Christendom, and it is to be observed that in the midst of the military and political interest that claimed so large a share of his time and attention, he did not neglect the internal affairs of the Church, and vigorously opposed heresies.[34]

Given this focus, Calixtus had little interest in devoting time to humanistic endeavors.

Calixtus succeeded the Italian Nicholas V, who was, by contrast, a great proponent of the humanist movement. Nicholas is largely considered the first Renaissance pope, though Pastor suggests it is Innocent VII, who was pope from 1404-1406 during the great Western Schism. Nicholas was the first pope post-schism, and he focused his efforts on rebuilding the city of Rome and the church's presence there.

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32 Mallett, M. *The Borgias,*10.

33 Mallett, M. *The Borgias,*87.

34 Ludwig von Pastor, History of the Popes, Vol. 2, p. 479-480

Nicholas offered wide protection to literary men and revived the University in Rome, not only in professional subjects but also in Greek and Latin.[35]

Nicholas also greatly expanded the Vatican's collection of texts, particularly those from Classical Greece and Rome.[36] At the start of his papacy, there were 350 codices and manuscripts in the Vatican collection, and by the end there were 1,235.[37] He also invited numerous Latin and Greek scholars to Rome, including the famed humanist and rhetorician Lorenzo Valla, Niccolò Perotti—author of one of the first and most popular Renaissance Latin schools, *Rudimenta Grammatices*—and Pietro Candido Decembrio, a student of the great Greek humanist and scholar Manuel Chrysolaras.[38]

Nicholas was also a major patron of the visual arts. Though he commissioned numerous works, his most prominent were Fra Angelico's frescoes for Nicholas' Vatican chapel. The Niccoline frescoes established a style that came to define the art of the Papal court during the late Quattrocento and early Cinquecento, including the Sistine chapter wall frescoes and the Borgia apartment frescoes.

Calixtus truly did not share these interests. Indeed his parsimony and thrift speak to his attitude towards patronage, and he commissioned no major works of art. Müntz opined that Calixtus was wholly uninterested in the arts as he was preoccupied with military pursuits.[39] Calixtus indeed began whipping up support foreign and

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35 James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990), 49.

36 Diana Cole Ahl, *Fra Angelico* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2008), 164.

37 Francesco Buranelli, introduction, in *Fra Angelico and the Chapel of Nicholas V*, ed. Innocenzo Venchi and Alessandro Bracchetti (Vatican City State: Edizioni Musei Vaticani, 1999), 8.

38 Buranelli, F. *Fra Angelico and the Chapel of Nicholas V,*8.

39 Müntz, E. *Les Arts À La Cour Des Papes Pendant Le XVe Et Le XVIe Siècle,* 204.

domestic support for the crusades immediately after his coronation. According to Mallett, the Vatican archives contain thirty-eight volumes of papal bulls Calixtus wrote regarding the Crusades.[40] Müntz also repeatedly points out that had Nicholas been succeeded by someone more like-minded, the new St Peter's Basilica might have already been built by the time that Julius ascended the papal throne in 1503.[41]

Calixtus's presence in the visual arts is limited to a handful of portraits, none of which he personally commissioned. The most prominent of these is a panel painting by Sano di Pietro entitled *The Virgin Mary Appears to Pope Calixtus III*, which depicts Calixtus as the defender of Siena (fig. 1). The piece was a gift from Sienese Republic after Calixtus's Papal forces helped the Sienese defend the city from an attack by King Alfonso of Spain.[42] The painting shows Calixtus in solemn conference with the Virgin Mary, the city of Siena below them. There was also a posthumous portrait commissioned, perhaps by Alexander, in 1476 (fig. 2). The portrait was painted by the Netherlandish artist Justus van Ghent, whose famous patrons included Frederico da Montefeltro and others.[43] In Justus's portrait, Calixtus sits dressed in the papal tiara and rich vestments, his left hand resting on a book.

There is also there a rather perplexing work commissioned by Camerlengo Don Francesco di Lorenzo of Siena, head of the *gabella* of Siena (fig 3). Since the twelfth century, the *Biccherna* was one of the main financial magistracies of the Republic of Siena, whose principle responsibility was levying taxes for the city.[44] These magistrates

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40 Mallett, M. *The Borgias,*71.

41 Müntz, E. *Les Arts À La Cour Des Papes Pendant Le XVe Et Le XVIe Siècle,* 204.

42 Mallett, M. *The Borgias,*74.

43 Lauts, Jan; Herzner, Irmlind Luise: Federico da Montefeltro. Herzog von Urbino : Kriegsherr, Friedensfürst und Förderer der Künste. München 2001,137

44 Carli Enzo, *Le Tavolette di Biccherna e di altri uffici dello Stato di Siena,* Electronic Edition, 1950.

often commissioned a tempera on panel cover for their bound records, and these tablets were decorated with a scene that was either sacred, symbolic, or linked to an event of particular importance that occurred during a certain officer's tenure.[45] Francesco di Lorenzo's tavoletta depicts The Annunciation flanked by St. Bernard of Clairevaux and Pope Calixtus. These figures are attended by a host of young girls. Below the girls are the customary arms of six prominent Sienese families. It is important to note that since *Gabella* tablets depicted the significant events of the age, Calixtus's presence only signifies that he was pope during Francesco's tenure as Camerlango of the Gabella and that the Sienese were grateful for Calixtus's protection against the Spanish. These works demonstrate that though Calixtus was not wholly absent from representation in the visual arts, he seemed uninterested in engaging in patronage.

Calixtus, unlike Nicholas and successors Sixtus IV, Innocent VIII, and Alexander, also planned no major building projects in Rome. Nicholas began to modernize Rome by restoring old Roman infrastructures, most notably the aqueducts. Most of the Roman aqueducts were destroyed in the sixth century when Rome was sacked.[46] During the Middle Ages, people mostly relied on well water, and the poor even resorted to drinking unclean water from the Tiber.[47] Nicholas rebuilt the Aqua Virgo aqueduct, first constructed by Agrippa in 19 BC,[48] bringing clean water to Rome and reviving a spirit of Imperial power in the city. Sixtus rebuilt the *Pons Aurelius,* a Roman bridge spanning the Tiber that was destroyed in the early Middle Ages. Innocent VIII

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45 Tomei, Alessandro, Le Biccherne di Siena : arte e finanza all'alba dell'economia moderna, exhib., 2002

46 Nicolas Cheetham, *Keepers of the Keys: A History of the Popes from St. Peter to John Paul II* (New York: Scribner, 1983), 180.

47 Cheetham, N. *Keepers of the Keys: A History of the Popes from St. Peter to John Paul II*,180.

48 Trevor Hodge, *Roman Aqueducts & Water Supply* (London: Duckworth, 1992), 36.

built the first Roman villa since ancient times,[49] which was faithfully based on Classical descriptions. Innocent decorated the villa with frescoes meant to mimic those found in Ancient Rome.[50]

Alexander sought to modernize Rome's urban landscape by clearing the dilapidated medieval building between the Castel Sant'Angelo and the Piazza San Pietro to create space for a straight new road.[51] This road, appropriately named the Via Alessandrina, offered a panoramic view of St. Peter's façade. When Julius had Saint Peter's basilica rebuilt, the Via Alessandrina helped showcase the new, distinctly Renaissance basilica. Alexander also made improvements to the Castel Sant'Angelo, once the Mausoleum of Hadrian, though this was motivated more by strategic political means than a desire to revive the prominence of ancient structures throughout the city. Calixtus made no such improvements to the city, which may account for the lacking of lasting impact his pontificate had on Renaissance Rome.

Calixtus's court was also never a social or intellectual center of any kind, and Müntz notes there were never any parties or celebrations recorded during Callixtus's tenure as pope.[52] He was also notably spartan in his taste, which seemed at least partially motivated by his focus on political, rather than cultural, concerns. He had a reputation for moral purity and a disinterest in personal luxury or wealth.[53] He had the silver candlesticks his papal apartments removed, and he furnished the room with austere wood

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49 Sarah Blake. McHam, *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Italian Renaissance: The Legacy of the Natural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 172.

50 McHam, S. *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Italian Renaissance: The Legacy of the Natural History,* 172.

51 Maurizio Calvesi and Lorenzo Canova, eds., *Rejoice!: 700 Years of Art for the Papal Jubilee* (New York: Rizzoli, 1999), 57.

52 Müntz, E. *Les Arts À La Cour Des Papes Pendant Le XVe Et Le XVIe Siècle*, 221.

53 Mallett, M. *The Borgias,* 67.

furniture and iron fixtures.[54] He also reportedly cried with he saw Nicholas's lavish silver salt cellar collection.[55] Calixtus, as has been said above, can be considered a late medieval pope who represented late medieval concerns. His ambivalence towards humanism and the visual arts represented a departure from the concerns of Nicholas, and indeed humanist culture was rather stalled during the three years of his pontificate.

Alexander varied dramatically from his uncle. Though he was not perhaps as immersed in the humanistic culture in Rome as some of his contemporaries, Alexander was still a Renaissance pope with a tangible relationship to the visual arts and humanist culture. As I will discuss in my chapters on style and iconography, there is no better proof of this than the Borgia apartments.

ALEXANDER AS A PATRON OF THE ARTS

Besides his sumptuous apartments, also commissioned several other prominent works that demonstration his engagement with the visual arts. I have already mentioned Alexander's construction of the Via Alessandrina. Though the street was an urban development project, it contributed to the beautification of the papal city and constituted a monumental legacy for the Borgia pope.

For the 1500 Jubilee, Alexander commissioned a new set of bronze doors for the so-called Holy Door to the right of the main portal on St. Peter's basilica. Because of the Via Alessandrina, the doors would have enjoyed a position of greater prominence in the piazza. The Jubilee placed Rome at the epicenter of the Christian world, and these doors offered Alexander the chance to publicly exhibit his wealth and contribute to the legacy of papal commissions commemorating the Jubilee. The Holy Doors were of vital

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54 Pastor, Ludwig. *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages. Drawn from the Secret Archives of the Vatican and Other Original Sources*, vol V. 337.

55 Müntz, E. *Les Arts À La Cour Des Papes Pendant Le XVe Et Le XVIe Siècle,* 215.

importance, as they were meant to symbolically represent the words of Christ: "I am the door…anyone who comes in through me shall be safe…"[56] As such, they lay at the heart of meaning for the Jubilee celebration. Alexander's new door was notably lavish, having been gilded and surrounded by an opulent marble frame.[57] Such splendor might have seemed antithetical to the theme of pilgrimage. However, Alexander's doors were meant to be a celebration of the majesty of God, and in this sense their sumptuousness appropriately reflect their significance. However, one cannot deny that they also spoke to Alexander's appreciation for visual splendor, an appreciation that is most fully realized in Pinturicchio's Borgia frescoes. Like several of Alexander's artistic commissions, the doors were lost, most likely during the construction of the new St. Peter's. Given that the bronze doors by Filarete commissioned by Pope Eugenius IV (1439-1445) was conserved and installed (with appropriate modifications) in the central portal of the new basilica, it is possible that the disappearance of Alexander's door can be considered part of Julius's *damnatio memoriae* against Alexander.

Aside for the Borgia apartment frescoes, Alexander's most important artistic commission was that of the Castel Sant'Angelo frescoes. As with the Borgia apartment frescoes, Alexander hired Pinturicchio to execute the commission. The frescoes were reportedly a narrative cycle of Alexander's life[58]. Today, the only elements to survive are Pinturicchio's characteristic *grotteschi* ornamentation. These details represent only a fraction of the frescoes and what they undoubtedly sought to convey both stylistically and iconographically. However, the repeated presence of *grotteschi* in

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56 John, 10:9

57 Calvesi, M. and Lorenzo Canova, eds., *Rejoice!: 700 Years of Art for the Papal Jubilee*, 57.

58 Vasari, Giorgio. *The Lives of the Artists*. Translated by Julia Conaway. Bondanella and Peter E. Bondanella 250.

Alexander's commissioned works indicates that Alexander's was likely fond of this type of *all'antica* ornamentation. This subsequently reflects that Alexander was not divorced from the humanist interest in the classical past.

Mallett suggests that the Borgia frescoes from the Castello would have been invaluable as source for Borgia portraits. There are several alleged portraits in Pinturicchio's Borgia frescoes, including Alexander's daughter Lucrezia as Saint Catherine of Alexandria and his sons Giovanni and Cesare as the sleeping guards in *The Resurrection* (figs. 4&5). However, the only verifiable portrait in the Borgia suite is one of Alexander himself, who kneels in prayer in the *Resurrection* (fig. 6). Alexander is dressed in intricately rendered vestments laden with gold, and his papal tiara sits on the ground beside him. He is shown in profile, and it is possible the portrait was modelled after an earlier portrait executed by a painter from the Spanish school in late Quattrocento (fig. 7).

Despite possible portraits, Mallett argues that Castello frescoes probably would have revealed little about either Pinturicchio as an artist or Alexander as a patron.[59] Art historians would likely disagree. They likely could have indicated whether the Alexandrine frescoes demonstrated a sensitivity to the concept of decorum in art or a mere manifestation of Alexander's love for visual splendor.

After all, Pinturicchio's Alexandrine frescoes in the Vatican are markedly more ornate than those Pinturicchio executed for other patrons. Consider his *Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints Augustine, Francis, Anthony of Padua and a Holy Monk* from the Basso della Rovere chapel in Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome (fig. 8) Though the della Rovere fresco, painted in the 1480s, does employ rich hues, gold accents, and

[59]Mallett, M. *The Borgias,* 235.

Classically-inspired ornamentation, it is no match for the lavish Alexandrine frescoes. Compare, for instance, the enthroned della Rovere Madonna to the seated allegorical figure of Music from the Borgia room of the Quadivium and Trivium (fig. 9) This disparity may be easily explained by each works' context; the della Rovere chapel frescoes adorn a sacred space where the Madonna is suitably (yet solemnly) depicted. The Borgia apartments were, by comparison, a semi-public secular space, and the figure depicted is allegorical.

Given the stylistic range within Pinturicchio's oeuvre, the Castello frescoes would have been telling. If they were as lavish as those in the Borgia apartments, they would have indicated a disregard for decorum, which would dictate that the frescoes adorning the walls of a military fortress should differ quite markedly from those in one's semi-private quarters.

Conversely, a departure from the sumptuously appointed apartment frescoes would have suggested an understanding of decorum. Furthermore, we know from Pinturicchio's frescoes in the loggia of Innocent VIII's Vatican palace that he was very conscious of *all'antica* style, though few extant examples remained by the late Quattrocento. Frescoes executed in a style that recalled Fourth style Roman painting would have revealed a true sensitivity to the revival of the Classical in Renaissance Rome that lay at the center of Roman humanism. It is perhaps presumptive to speculate what these frescoes would have looked like, but I would contend that they would have revealed much about both patron and artist. Moreover, they form a significant contribution to Alexander's body of commissions, indicating he did in fact appreciate the value of the visual arts during the period.

THE BORGIA PAPAL APARTMENTS

Alexander's suite of six rooms on the *piano nobile* of the Vatican palace undoubtedly reveal more about Alexander as a patron than any other work surviving from his reign. There are six rooms in total, and though they remain in various states of preservation, they each of feature both unique imagery and a shared a set of symbols that frequently repeat and seek to explicitly suggest certain themes. I will discuss these symbols and what they represent in Chapter Three, but it important to understand that the rooms relate very elegantly to one another.

The first room is *La Sala delle Sibelle*, or the room of the prophets and sibyls as it is generally known in English. The wall frescoes have been lost, and the lunette frescoes remain. Each lunette features and Old Testament figure with a corresponding female prophet. All of the figures are labeled with a *cartellino* (fig 10). In the triangular spaces between the lunettes are representation of the planets as Romans gods and goddesses, which are accompanied allegorical figure of Astrology. The room also features an abundance of Roman-style *grotteschi* as well as Borgia imagery, including a cherub riding a bull. The bull, which is the emblem of the Borgia house, is without contest the most frequently repeated image throughout the apartments, and its appearance in all of the rooms reinforces the apartment's overarching theme of Borgia legitimacy and supremacy.

The second room, like the first, depicts the prophets, though this time they are coupled with the apostles. The second room features *grotteschi* very similar to those in the first. Both rooms are also tiled with geometric Mozarabic tiles that evoke Moorish-influenced Andalucía. This seamless union of both Spanish and Roman elements aptly depicts Alexander's dual heritage.

The third room, that of the Trivium and Quadrivium, allegorically represents five of the seven liberal arts. Music (fig. 9), Grammar (fig. 11), Geometry (fig. 12), Rhetoric (fig. 13), and Astrology (fig. 14) are all depicted as stately female figures surrounded by their accompanying symbolism. The room is filled with Borgia symbolism as well, and several golden bulls are prominently featured against rich lapis lazuli backgrounds (fig 15).

The fourth and fifth rooms, respectively the Hall of The Martyrdom of the Saints and The Hall of the Mysteries of the Faith, are both narrative, and they offer the most symbolism, both Christian and pagan. *The Disputation of Saint Catherine of Alexandria* dominates the back wall (fig 16). The wall that includes the door features *Visit of Saint Anthony of Egypt to Saint Paul the Hermit in the Desert* and *The Visitation* (figs. 17&18). The far wall features *The Martyrdom of St. Barbara* and *Susanna and the Elders* (figs 19&20). The wall opposite features The *Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian*, which includes anachronistic images of the Coliseum, meant to herald contemporary Rome (fig. 21). The ceiling depicts a narration of the myth of the Apis Bull from Egyptian mythology (figs 22,23,24,25). The inclusion of the Apis Bull hardly needs explanation, as it offers the artist a convenient excuse for representing the symbol of the Borgia household.

The final room is the Hall of The Mysteries of the Faith, which contains, as mentioned, a confirmed portrait of Alexander (fig. 6). The far wall depicts *The Annunciation* and *The Nativity* (fig 26,27). Moving clockwise, the next wall features *The Adoration of the Magi* and *The Resurrection* (figs. 28,29) The back wall is dominated by *The Ascension* (fig. 30) while the final wall portrays *The Descent of the Holy Spirit* and *The Assumption of the Virgin* (figs. 31,32). The Halls of the Martyrdom of the Saints and the Mysteries of the Faith offer the greatest volume of iconographic information. They also while serve as the greatest examples of Pinturicchio's Ornate Classical style.

The Borgia frescoes also share stylistic similarities with the major works commissioned by Nicholas and Sixtus, and in this way Alexander seemed aware of the Courtly Papal style established by his predecessors. Pinturicchio's style undoubtedly shares a common origin with the styles of both the Niccoline and Sistine frescoes, which is the International Gothic. The International Gothic was the prevailing court style throughout Europe from the late Trecento to the mid Quattrocento. It was favored by princes and nobles for its use of gold and overall visual splendor.[60] The Papal court was a place of similar power and culture by the time Nicholas ascended the papal throne in 1447, so it is unsurprising that he would want frescoes that included these stylistic principles.

In her book *Fra Angelico*, Diana Cole Ahl discusses what she calls the "elevated visual language" of the Niccoline frescoes, particularly in comparison to some of Fra Angelico's more spartan works.[61] Consider, for instance, the Niccoline fresco *The Ordination of Saint Lawrence* with *The Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints Augustine and Thomas Aquinas* from the monastery of San Marco in Florence (fig 33,34). Ahl suggests the luminous colors, use of gold leaf, and architectural elements of Fra Angelico's Niccoline frescoes profoundly influenced later papal commissions. She offers Melozzo da Forlí's *Pope Sixtus IV Naming Bartolomeo Platina Prefect of the Vatican Library* (fig. 35) as a specific example, and she writes, "[i]n both programme and style, the Chapel of Nicholas V established the decorum of papal narrative for decades to come.[62] We may thus understand that Pinturicchio's Borgia frescoes, while unique in

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60 Hellmut Wohl, *The Aesthetics of Italian Renaissance Art: A Reconsideration of Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 138.
61 Cole Ahl, D. *Fra Angelico*, 187.
62 Cole Ahl, D. *Fra Angelico,*187.

certain aspects, also followed in the visual traditions established by the earlier papal commissions.

Note the stylistic similarities between the Niccoline *Ordination of Saint Lawrence* and two frescoes commissioned by Sixtus and Alexander, respectively Sandro Botticelli's *The Punishment of Korah* from 1482 and Pinturicchio's *Annunciation* from the Borgia apartments. (figs.33,36, 26). Fra Angelico's fresco sets the tone for the papal courtly style, and though his is comparatively less ornate, the main figures' vestments are laden with gold, and the bright yellow and lapis lazuli introduce a sumptuousness previously absent in Fra Angelico's earlier Florentine works. While the frescoes are not lacking in elements that we may deem markedly Renaissance, namely the linear perspective and the Corinthian columns, its stylistic root is derived from International Gothic elements.

Botticelli's *The Punishment of Korah* indeed builds on the style established in the Niccoline frescoes, though it also takes the lavishness to new levels. Botticelli, like Fra Angelico, is generous yet delicate in his use of gold embellishment. Botticelli also takes Fra Angelico's inclusion of Classical elements to new heights. *The Punishment of Korah*'s composition centers on a Roman triumphal arch laden with gold accents. Botticelli also features bright blue and yellow hues. In concert with the gold, Botticelli's fresco would have read well even from a distance.

Pinturicchio takes this Papal Courtly style to its fullest extension, and I will argue in my next chapter that of the three artists, his is the style which most closely relates to those of International Gothic artists. His work is saturated by gold and deep, rich hues. Like Botticelli, Pinturicchio's *Anunciation* centers on a arch, and his arch is similarly appointed with gold. However, his work is not completely triumphal devoid of

what we may term Renaissance rationalism, and he displays a thorough mastery of linear perspective.

The papal courtly style is one that Vasari largely considered retardaire, and he even went so far as to specifically criticize Sixtus's love of Cosimo Rosselli's work. However, it was clear that it was a style that popes noted for their interest in humanism enjoyed.[63] In understanding that the papal court was not antithetical to humanist interests, it becomes easier to understand that Alexander's love of this style did not disqualify him from being an intellectual or a sophisticated patron of the arts.

ALEXANDER AND HUMANISM

There were a variety of reasons Alexander was widely considered a pope uninterested in humanism. Indeed, he employed relatively few humanists at his court, and he often relied on them in a political, rather intellectual, capacity.[64] However, despite their rather low number, there were still several well-respected humanists within Alexander's curia and larger circle. One was Oliviero Carafa—a humanist cardinal and advisor to Alexander—who commissioned frescoes for his chapel at Santa Maria Sopra Minerva around the same time Alexander commissioned Pinturicchio to paint his frescoes. Like Nicholas, Sixtus, and Alexander, Carafa's frescoes, painted by Fillipino Lippi, featured generous amounts of gold leaf and may be considered a similar exhibition of the Papal Courtly style. Lippi also included *grotteschi* ornamentation similar those in the Borgia frescoes, particularly in the portico that houses the angel Gabriel and the Virgin in an *Annunciation* scene (fig. 37). I will discuss the Carafa chapel frescoes in greater detail in the following chapter.

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63 Müntz, E. *Les Arts À La Cour Des Papes Pendant Le XVe Et Le XVIe Siècle,* 204.

64 John F. D'Amico, *Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome: Humanists and Churchmen on the Eve of the Reformation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 10.

Two notable humanists in Alexander's immediate circle were the Germain Lorenz Behaim and the Greek Ludovico Podocatharo.[65] Podacatharo was a scholar of Classic Greek language and literature. Behaim was a member of the Roman Academy of *Pomponius Laetus,* and well-respected in humanist circles.[66]

There were also several noted humanists in the entourage of Cesare, Alexander's eldest son. There were some, like Leonardo da Vinci, who were uninterested in Cesare's rather singular military pursuits.[67] However, there were just as many who flocked to Cesare and pursued their humanist endeavors until his patronage. There was Carlo Valgulio, who was a friend of Copernicus and the teacher of Poliziano.[68] Poliziano has been credited as key figure in the transition from Medieval Latin forms to those of the Renaissance.[69] There was also Fausto Evangelina, a historian and member of the Roman Academy.[70] Perhaps the most notable was Serafino de Cimminelli, often referred to as L'Aquilano, who was deemed the Petrarch of his day.[71]

However, it is equally important to note that Alexander in no way inhibited or repressed humanism, which continued to advance in the Curia and in Rome's intellectual circles.[72] While this minimal engagement does not make him a humanist, contemporaries describe Alexander was still considered an intelligent and capable man.

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65 Mallett, M. *The Borgias,*, 100.

66 Mallett, M. *The Borgias,*, 100.

67 Mallett, M., *The Borgias,* 218.

68 Mallett, M. *The Borgias,* 217.

69 Celenza, C.S. (2009). Maes, Y.; Papy, J.; Verbaal, W. (eds.). "End Game: Humanist Latin in the Late Fifteenth Century". *Latinitas Perennis Volume II: Appropriation and Latin Literature Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 178* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV): 201–244.

70 Mallett, M. *The Borgias,* 217.

71 Mallett, M. *The Borgias,*, 217.

72 John F. D'Amico, *Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome: Humanists and Churchmen on the Eve of the Reformation*, 10.

Jacopo Gheraldi da Volterra, a diplomat and historian noted that Alexander was "man of versatile intellect" with a keen sense for business.[73] Sigismondo de'Conti, a humanist and poet, described him as an extremely accomplished man with "distinguished intellectual gifts."[74]

Alexander also had a few modest humanistic endeavors of his own. He is credited with the protection of the Academy of humanist Julius Pompinio Leto[75]. Leto adopted the Latin name of Lautus after his formation of his academy in 1457, in which the members discussed classical questions.[76] Laetus died in 1498, five years into Alexander's pontificate, and Alexander protected Lautus's academy from those who sought to disband it.[77] Alexander also supported the *Studium Urbis*, Rome's first University, which Pope Boniface VIII had established with a bull in 1303.[78] Sixtus IV, who promoted the humanist study of Classical Latin and Greek, had also supported the university.[79] By the time of Alexander's reign, the humanist culture was blooming at the *Studium Urbis*, and they were endeavors that Alexander enthusiastically supported.[80]

These modest undertakings aside, the most relevant discussion to understanding Alexander's relationship with humanism is his engagement with the

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73 Mallett, M. *The Borgias,*, 82.

74 Pastor, Ludwig. *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages. Drawn from the Secret Archives of the Vatican and Other Original Sources*. Edited by Frederick Ignatius Antrobus. Vol. IV, 386.

75 Calvesi, M., and Lorenzo Canova, eds. *Rejoice!: 700 Years of Art for the Papal Jubilee*, 61.

76 Pastor, Ludwig. *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages. Drawn from the Secret Archives of the Vatican and Other Original Sources*. Edited by Frederick Ignatius Antrobus. Vol. IV,41.

77 Accame, Maria. *Pomponio Leto: vita e insegnamento* (Tivoli [Roma]: Tored, 2008)

78 Lee Egmont, *Sixtus IV and Men of Letters* (Roma: Edizioni Di Storia E Letteratura, 1978), 151.

79 Lee, E. *Sixtus IV and Men of Letters*,192.

80 Calvesi, M., and Lorenzo Canova, eds. *Rejoice!: 700 Years of Art for the Papal Jubilee*,61.

subject of Rhetoric. The revival and practice of Classical rhetoric was one of the cornerstones of Renaissance humanism. As I will argue in chapter two, Alexander's relationship with Rhetoric likely lies at the core of understanding his sophistication as a patron and informed the way he looked at and understood the visual arts.

Alexander's first in-depth exposure would have come by means of his university education. He attended the University of Bologna, the oldest University in Europe, where he studied canon law. His uncle Calixtus was the one who likely took charge of Rodrigo's education and paid for university. The date Alexander arrived in Bologna has been the subject of much debate, though university records seem to indicate that he began in 1455, the same year Calixtus was elected pope.[81]

The University of Bologna was particularly known for its programs in canon and civil law, which were centered around the study of the *Digest,* a central text of Ancient Roman law that was rediscovered in 1070.[82] The Medieval university curricula included the study of the seven liberal arts, which were divided into two categories, the Quadrivium and Trivium. The Trivium, which consisted of Grammar, Rhetoric, and logic, were taught first, as they were consisted the most important.[83] Thus, we know that Alexander would have been well versed in the subject of rhetoric, which was part of university curricula since the 11th century.

Alexander's most direct interaction with humanist rhetoric would have come through the liturgies he would have heard almost daily in his court. In his book *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome,* John O'Malley discusses how humanists began

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81 Mallett, M. *The Borgias,*, 83.

82 Robert S. Rait, *Life in the Medieval University* (Cambridge: University Press, 1912), 138.

83Rait, R.S. *Life in the Medieval University*, 138.

infusing their liturgies with Classical, as opposed to Medieval, rhetorical practices.[84] This was a critical development in the humanism of Papal Rome, because as O'Malley also points out, "the observance of liturgical solemnities by the pope and his court were at the heart of meaning in Papal Rome."[85]

By the time Alexander became pope, others now delivered sermons in the pope's presence, or *corum papa*.[86] Sermons given *coram papa* (in the presence of the pope) allowed the pope to listen and truly contemplate the word of God. This practice was largely instituted during Pius II's pontificate, which lasted from 1458 to 1464, and thus would have been an established tradition by Alexander's pontificate. More and more sermons were influenced by Classical principles that one would not have encountered in medieval rhetoric.[87] Humanist sermons even avoided ecclesiastical words that had no Classical precedent, like "cardinales", "apostolus", and "propheta".[88] Instead, humanist orators found ways to incorporate Classical terms, often referring to the Church as "imperium" or "res public Christiana".[89] This was, in some instances, met with outrage and distain by more traditional rhetoricians,[90] but this practice was so pervasive that it quickly became the norm.

84John W. O'Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome: Rhetoric, Doctrine, and Reform in the Sacred Orators of the Papal Court, C. 1450-1521* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1979), 3.

85 O'Malley, J.M. *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome: Rhetoric, Doctrine, and Reform in the Sacred Orators of the Papal Court, C. 1450-1521*, 3.

86 Mallett, M. *The Borgias*,13.

87 O'Malley, J.M. *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome: Rhetoric, Doctrine, and Reform in the Sacred Orators of the Papal Court, C. 1450-1521*, 51.

88 O'Malley, J.M. *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome: Rhetoric, Doctrine, and Reform in the Sacred Orators of the Papal Court, C. 1450-1521*,51.

89 O'Malley, J.M. *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome: Rhetoric, Doctrine, and Reform in the Sacred Orators of the Papal Court, C. 1450-1521*,51.

90 O'Malley, J.M. *and Blame in Renaissance Rome: Rhetoric, Doctrine, and Reform in the Sacred Orators of the Papal Court, C. 1450-1521,* 29.

With sermons now being given *coram papa* and being thoroughly saturated with Classically-inspired rhetoric, Alexander would have heard and been surrounded by thoroughly humanistic rhetoric. It is perhaps misleading to try and determine to what degree Alexander truly understood and appreciated the finer points of Classical rhetoric, but he heard some of the most prominent humanist rhetoricians of his time give sermons. One such rhetorician was Thomas de Vio, referred to as simply Catejan, who was the best known of all the court preachers.[91] On the first Sunday of Advent in 1501, he gave an oration before Alexander in the style rhetoricians and scholars refer to as Latiny and which is considered one most the most classicizing and difficult of court sermons.[92] His sermon centered around the words of Luke 11: 5-8, which read:

> And he said to them: Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight, and shall say to him: Friend, lend me three loaves, Because a friend of mine is come off his journey to me, and I have not what to set before him. And he from within should answer, and say: Trouble me not, the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. Yet if he shall continue knocking, I say to you, although he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend; yet, because of his importunity, he will rise, and give him as many as he needeth.[8]

The passage refers to each man's good will, and the strong yet elegant phrasing was somewhat unique to Luke's interpretations of the Lord's teaching. Catejan's summary paraphrasing of the passage was done in classicizing vocabulary and syntax.[93]

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91 Marvin O'Connell, "Cardinal Cajetan," *New Scholasticism* 50, no. 3 (1976): 317.

92 O'Malley, J.W. *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome: Rhetoric, Doctrine, and Reform in the Sacred Orators of the Papal Court, C. 1450-1521*,108.

93 Douai-Rheims translation, Luke 11:5-8

We may see Catejan's determination to adapt even the Latin of the Vulgate into a more classical structure.[94]

O'Malley suggests that this type of sermon aimed to engage listeners by clearly conveying the orator's interpretation of a passage, then appealing to listeners on an emotional level.[95] In this sense, we may categorize Catejan's Advent sermon as epideictic, which can be described as "display" oratory, and whose elegant construction was almost an end itself. Alexander's exposure to this type of thoroughly classical orations may have very well influenced the way he interpreted art, which, since the Quattrocento, had often been understood by art theorists in literary or poetic terms.

Given Alexander's reputation as a pope more interested in politics, self-aggrandizement, and debauchery, it is difficult to ascertain his relationship with humanist rhetoric. However, my second chapter explores the ways in which Pinturicchio's frescoes were saturated by rhetorical principles translated into the visual arts. In this interpretation of Pinturicchio's work, we may understand Alexander as pope with greater intellectual prowess and erudition than previously imagined.

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94 O'Malley, J.M. *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome: Rhetoric, Doctrine, and Reform in the Sacred Orators of the Papal Court, C. 1450-1521*,108.

95 O'Malley, J.M. *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome: Rhetoric, Doctrine, and Reform in the Sacred Orators of the Papal Court, C. 1450-1521*,109.

Chapter Two: Pinturicchio and the Borgia Frescoes' Style

The complex iconographic program of the Borgia frescoes reveals a sophistication of thought that suggests it was likely authored for Alexander by humanist scholars. However it is Pinturicchio's lavish style, perhaps even more than the iconography, which reveals these works erudition and complexity, as well as their connection to humanist thought. The style reflects aspects of rhetorical theory that would have attracted and delighted the educated viewer. Given Alexander's repeated patronage of Pinturicchio, the humanist influence and currency of classical rhetorical practices within his Court, and his own schooling, we may understand him to have been one such educated viewer.

However, before considering the ways in Alexander would have conceived of and appreciated Pinturicchio's multi-layered aesthetic program, we must understand the complicated relationship between patron and style. Though no contract survives for the Borgia frescoes, patrons often had influence on iconographic programs of their commissioned works. They were often advised by ecclesiastical and humanist scholars, who could influence what humanist painter and art theorist Giovanni Lomazzo referred to as the "forma", or the correct appearance and attributes of the figures represented.[96] *Forma* describes, in essence, the iconographic program of a work.

However, it is difficult to discern what degree of control, if any, patrons had on the actual stylistic elements in the works of a particular artist. In his book *The Aesthetics of Italian Renaissance Art*, the subtitle of which is "A Reconsideration of Style", Hellmut Wohl points out that arguments regarding the issue are too often circular. He explains,

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96 O'Malley, John W. *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome: Rhetoric, Doctrine, and Reform in the Sacred Orators of the Papal Court, C. 1450-1521*,12.

"The artistic preferences of the patron are inferred from the stylistic characteristics of work that he or she is known to or thought to have commissioned, and these stylistic traits are in turn attributed to the patron's influence."[97] Wohl highlights the common problem regarding patron and style, which is that patronal influence is often inferred in spite of no concrete evidence of its existence.

In "Renaissance and Pseudo-Renaissance", Frederico Zeri argued there is no connection between patron and style, pointing to the fact that patrons commissioned works from artists working in completely disparate and even antithetical styles. He uses Pope Nicolas V as his primary example, explaining that he commissioned frescoes by both Fra Angelico and Bartolomeo di Tommaso da Foligno to decorate his Vatican apartments. These Vatican frescoes have been regrettably been lost, but we can imagine the contrast if we compare Fra Angelico's 1447 fresco *The Ordination of Saint Lawrence* from the Niccoline chapel with Bartolomeo's *Martyrdom of Saint Barbara* fresco, also dating from about the middle of the Quattrocento (figs 33,38).

As Zeri points out, Bartolomeo's "pseudo-Renaissance" style, with its flat gold background and stylized shading, is antithetical to the perspectival depth and classicizing elements in Fra Angelico's frescoes. It is this sort of stylistic dichotomy that leads Zeri to conclude that "there is no connection between style and patronage, between social status and the language of art."[98] Subsequent authors, such as Joseph Manca, have modified this assessment, suggesting instead that artists determined the language of art, and patrons responded to this language, encouraging it and validating it through their patronage.[99]

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97 Hellmut Wohl, *The Aesthetics of Italian Renaissance Art: A Reconsideration of Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 245.

98 Federico Zeri, *Renaissance Et Pseudo Renaissance* (Paris: Rivages, 1985), 16.

99 Joseph Manca, *The Art of Ercole De' Roberti* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 6.

The symbiotic relationship Manca describes is most likely what we see in the Borgia apartments. In comparing the Borgia frescoes' stylistic program with other works by Pinturicchio, one can identify no elements that seem entirely exceptional within Pinturicchio's oeuvre. Consider Pinturicchio's frescoes in Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome, which anticipate the style of the Alexander frescoes in almost every regard. *Madonna Enthroned with Saints Augustine, Francis, Anthony of Padua, and Holy Monk*, the altarpiece of the Basso della Rovere chapel from between 1484 and 1492 (fig. 8), features the same delicate landscape Pinturicchio continually employed in various Borgia frescoes, including *Susanna and the Elders* from The *Sala dei Santi* in the Borgia apartments (fig. 16). The Madonna's architectural throne in the della Rovere fresco features a combination of gold embellishment and *grotteschi* ornamentation that Pinturicchio would later utilize in the Borgia apartments in forms like the coffered dome in *The Annunciation* fresco from The *Sala dei Misteri della Fede* (figs 39,26).

That being said, the style of the Borgia frescoes does seem to diverge somewhat from Pinturicchio's more traditionally "Renaissance" frescoes, like *The Funeral of St. Bernardino* from the Bufalini chapel in Santa Maria in Aracoeli in Rome, painted in around 1484, or *Dispute with the Doctors* from the Baglione chapel in Santa Maria Maggiore in Spello from 1500-1501 (figs. 40,41). The linear perspective in *The Funeral of St. Bernardino* and *Dispute with the Doctors* directly recalls *The Delivery of the Keys* by Pinturicchio's master Perugino from the Sistine chapel (fig. 42). *The Funeral of San Bernardino* and *Dispute with the Doctors,* which were completed before and after the Borgia apartment frescoes, respectively, also exhibit a degree of rationalism and an extensive use of linear perspective absent in the more lyrical, decorative Borgia frescoes.

Vasari suggests Pinturicchio's use of gold and *pastiglia* in some of the frescoes in the Borgia apartments, most notably *The Disputation of Saint Catherine* from the *Sala dei Santi,* destroys the illusion of perspective Vasari complains that Pinturicchio, "...depicted the arches of Rome in relief in such a way that while the figures are in the foreground and the buildings in the background, the receding objects seem nearer than those which should be larger to the eye, the most tremendous heresy in our craft."(fig. 16).[100]

Whether or not we agree with this assessment, there is no denying that the Borgia frescoes are much more heavily ornamented than others Pinturicchio was commissioned to produce. Thus it is conceivable Alexander requested the quantity of gilded ornamentation in the Borgia apartments. As I will later discuss, the rooms' lavishness ultimately become a matter of decorum, and the gold would suited the rooms' context and Alexander's elevated status. In understanding that it would have be deemed appropriate that the pope should surround himself with such splendor, we may also understand the sophistication of Pinturicchio's Borgia frescoes.

THE BORGIA FRESCOES AS A REFLECTION OF THE PATRON'S TASTE

Alexander's decision to employ Pinturicchio for two prominent commissions, the Borgia apartments and the now lost frescoes inside the Castel Sant'Angelo, suggests that the pope specifically valued Pinturicchio's style. Thus we can gain insight into Alexander's taste as a patron by examining Pinturicchio's style. Pinturicchio's ornate aesthetic was informed by the styles of Quattrocento artists such as Pisanello and Gentile da Fabriano, both of whom were greatly admired by humanists. Like Gentile and Pisanello, Pinturicchio's compositions exhibit a great deal of ornateness, copiousness,

100 Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*, trans. Julia Conaway. Bondanella and Peter E. Bondanella (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 254.

and variety, all of three which were components of rhetorical theory, as I will explore in greater detail later in this chapter. This is not to suggest Pinturicchio was creating art using specific principles drawn from classical or Renaissance rhetorical theory. However, his style lends itself to being read like an oration, and humanists would have valued it as such. This is perhaps what Alexander liked about Pinturicchio's work; it both dazzles instantaneously and invites the viewer to continue looking to fully digest the denseness, complexity, and sophistication of thought. As a man accustomed to listening to complicated orations in the form of humanist sermons, Alexander would have been well-suited to reading the involved visual arguments at work in Pinturicchio's style.

Many writers, beginning with Vasari, have suggested that Pinturicchio's style was garish and lurid, his use of gold a cover for his poor draftsmanship and employed to dazzle viewers with unsophisticated tastes. In his passage on Pinturicchio from *Lives of the Artists,* Vasari writes, "in his painting, Bernardino frequently employed golden ornaments in relief to satisfy those who understood very little of this craft, so that they would be more gaudy and lustrous, something which is a very crude device in painting."[101] However, the suggestion that Pinturicchio's style catered primarily to the unsophisticated viewer is misguided. Pinturicchio's ornate use of bright colors, intricate patterns, and gold, as well as his delicate, detailed landscapes directly recalls the elaborate style of artists like of Gentile da Fabriano and Pisanello from the mid-Quattrocento in Florence, neither of whom could ever be described as deficient in draftsmanship.

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101 Vasari G., *The Lives of the Artists*, trans. Julia Conaway. Bondanella and Peter E. Bondanella, 251.

PICTORIAL STYLE AND LITERARY RHETORIC

The International Gothic was a style that was venerated by the early humanists for best reflecting what they interpreted to be the aims and ideals of classical art[102]. Understanding what specific aspects of Gentile and Pisanello's aesthetic appealed to early humanist thought establishes the basis for understanding the value Pinturicchio's style would have had for an educated audience.

Beyond its relationship to the ornate style of the mid-Quattrocento, Pinturicchio's style also reflects many of the more general concerns of humanist art criticism, which was marked by the infusion of classical and Renaissance rhetorical theory into the language used to discuss and judge art. A review of surviving humanist writing about art from the fifteenth century, together with the classical rhetorical texts which were being read and discussed around the turn of the sixteenth century in Rome, suggests a variety of ways in which the sumptuous style of Pinturicchio's Borgia frescoes would have satisfied and even delighted viewers familiar with these texts. It is in this connection between Pinturicchio's style and humanism that we can understand Alexander as a man of erudite and sophisticated artistic sensibilities, a view of the pope that has been little emphasized.

Though more recent scholarship, including Wohl's *Aesthetics of Italian Renaissance Art* and others, has called for new critical terms, the sumptuous style of Gentile da Fabriano, Pisanello, and similar such artists is most often referred to as the International Gothic The style emerged around the turn of the fifteenth century within the princely courts of Northern and Central Europe, like London and Dijon, as well as Northern Italian courts like Milan and Mantua. As the label suggests, like was a style that spanned regional barriers, forming a singular style that became inextricably associated

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102 Michael Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition, 1350-1450*(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 91.

with courtliness. The International Gothic aesthetic was informed both by illuminated manuscripts and Flemish and Burgundian tapestries, both of which were similarly sumptuous in their use of materials and aimed very specifically at wealthy court patrons. Lauro Martines perhaps summarized the International Gothic's aesthetic best, explaining that works associated with the movement exhibited:

> a strong predilection for highly finished surfaces, meticulous details, strong contours and edges, an all-pervading clarity, and a fondness for luminous coloration or brilliant light…the picture is crowded with objects and rich decoration—arches, thrones, other architectural elements, putti, floral and fanciful patterns, garlands of fruit or flowers, polychrome marble, and luxuriously embossed fabrics. [103]

Consider Gentile da Fabriano's *Adoration of the Magi* from 1435, which is perhaps one of the best-preserved examples of the International Gothic style (fig. 43). The panel is heavily adorned with gold leaf and delicate embossments that reflect light and gives the painting a luminous effect. Gentile shows great care in replicating details, whether in the rich textiles of the Magi's cloaks, or in the proliferation of flora and fauna that populate the involved composition. Another important example is Pisanello's *Saint George and The Princess* fresco from the Pellegrini chapel of Sant'Anastasia in Verona, also from the 1430s (fig. 44) Though not as well-preserved as Gentile's altarpiece, Pisanello's frescoes features similarly intricate patterns, use of gold embellishments, and dense inclusion of elements, including highly-detailed and animals and foliage.

What perhaps most separates the ornate styles of Gentile and Pisanello from what Wohl calls the "Ornate Classical Style" of Pinturicchio is, naturally, an infusion of classical elements. More specifically, Pinturicchio's aesthetic differed from those of the

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[103] Lauro Martines, *Power and Imagination: City-States in Renaissance Italy* (1980), 266.

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earlier generation through his use of *grotteschi.* The *grotteschi* were forms derived from Roman fourth style painting. More specifically, they were copied from examples in Emperor Nero's *Domus Aurea*, which was built between 64 and 68 AD and rediscovered in the mid-to-late Quattrocento (fig. 45). The exact date of rediscovery is unknown, though it must be been before 1481, because Ghirlandaio's *Codex Escurialensis* has several drawing of *grotteschi*.[104] We know Pinturicchio visited the site personally, as his signature survives scratched into the wall.[105] While some classical writers, such as Vitruvius and Horace, condemned *grotteschi* for their lack of naturalism,[106] Beginning in the latter half of the Quattrocento, both Renaissance artists and their learned patrons embraced them wholeheartedly as a new form of ornamentation in art, particularly in Rome. As I will discuss in greater detail later in this chapter, *grotteschi* introduced a symbolic link to the Classical world that echoed and re-enforced the rhetorical elements in Pinturicchio's style

The somewhat pejorative term International Gothic is an indication of the historiographic problems one faces when discussing the style, particularly within the larger context of the Italian Renaissance. The inclusion of the word 'gothic' in the title suggests a pre-Renaissance, anti-humanist aesthetic that eschews Renaissance artistic concerns to favor of maintaining those of the late medieval period. This is due in part to the continual comparison of these artists to the work of Masaccio, whom Vasari considered the best artist of his generation[107] and whom subsequent scholars have cited as

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104 Nicole Dacos, *La Découverte De La Domus Aurea Et La Formation Des Grotesques à La Renaissance* (Leiden, 1969), 173.

105 Dacos, N. *La Découverte De La Domus Aurea Et La Formation Des Grotesques à La Renaissance,* 173.

106 Wohl, H., *The Aesthetics of Italian Renaissance Art: A Reconsideration of Style,* 217.

107 Vasari G., *The Lives of the Artists*, trans. Julia Conaway. Bondanella and Peter E. Bondanella, 175.

one of the first true Renaissance artists.[108] Masaccio's work was free of Gothic influence and noted for its sparse, "pure" style.[109] It was similarly marked by its adherence to realism, dedication to linear perspective, and inclusion of the classical architectural elements that began to emerge during the Renaissance, as displayed in his famous *Holy Trinity* for Santa Maria Novella in Florence, painted in around 1427 (fig. 46). In comparison to Masaccio's stark rationalism, the delicate, ornate styles of Gentile da Fabriano and Pisanello have been deemed retardaire.[110]

However, the antithetical relationship between the two styles that scholars have posited over the years, with one harkening back to the gothic and one partaking of the humanism of the Renaissance, is unhistorical. In fact, as mentioned, the International Gothic style was a style that Florentine humanists celebrated. As Wohl discusses, humanists like Leonardo Bruni (1369-1444), Bartolomeo Fazio (1400-1457), Guarino of Verona (1374-1460), Manuel Chrysoloras (1355-1415)—all of whom were the premiere humanist thought leaders and taste-makers of their day—found "the descriptively and ornamentally elaborate mode" of artists like Gentile da Fabriano and Pisanello to be the most worthy of comparison to classical models.[111] Michael Baxandall came to similar conclusions much earlier in his book *Giotto and The Orators*, writing that "it is one of the more disconcerting facts of Quattrocento art history that more praise was addressed by humanists to Pisanello that to any other artists of the first half of the century; in this

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108 Laurie Adams, *A History of Western Art* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1994), 187.
109 Vasari G., *The Lives of the Artists*, trans. Julia Conaway. Bondanella and Peter E. Bondanella, 175.
110 Wohl, Hellmut. *The Aesthetics of Italian Renaissance Art: A Reconsideration of Style*, 238.
111 Wohl, Hellmut. *The Aesthetics of Italian Renaissance Art: A Reconsideration of Style,* 238.

sense—and it seems a reasonably substantive one—Pisanello, not Masaccio, is the 'humanist' artist."[112]

Indeed, Gentile da Fabriano's *Adoration of the Magi* was commissioned by Palla Strozzi, a leading Florentine humanist and patron of the arts during the mid-Quattrocento in Florence. Vespasiano da Bisticci(1421-1498), another humanist scholar who aided in the formation of the Laurentian library, included Strozzi in his *Vite di uomini illustri del secolo XV,* written in the latter part of the fifteenth century, around 1480.[113] Vespasiano mentioned that Strozzi was learned in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, Strozzi fostered the academic study of Greek in Florence at a time when most the classical texts that were being read and discussed were those written in Latin.[114] Leonardo Bruni, the learned chancellor of the Florentine republic and author of commentaries on Aristotle, was also fond of the International Gothic style.[115]

As Wohl points out, the humanist interest in the International Gothic style was rooted in the fact that, "the naturalistic description, copious details, and chivalric display…were the qualities that they also admired in classical art."[116] The humanists were particularly interested in the adherence to naturalism in the works of Gentile, Pisanello, and the other International Gothic artists. They were praised for their delicate, detail-oriented landscapes, whose naturalism reflected the ideals of classical writers such

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112 Baxandall, M. *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition, 1350-1450*, 91.

113 Vespasiano, *Renaissance Princes, Popes, and Prelates: The Vespasiano Memoirs, Lives of Illustrious Men of the XVth Century*, ed. W. G. Waters and Emily Waters (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 17

114 Vespasiano, *Renaissance Princes, Popes, and Prelates: The Vespasiano Memoirs, Lives of Illustrious Men of the XVth Century*, ed. W. G. Waters and Emily Waters,235.

115 Vespasiano, *Renaissance Princes, Popes, and Prelates: The Vespasiano Memoirs, Lives of Illustrious Men of the XVth Century*, ed. W. G. Waters and Emily Waters, 305.

116 Wohl, Hellmut. *The Aesthetics of Italian Renaissance Art: A Reconsideration of Style,* 238.

as Pliny and Vitruvius. Vitruvius, for example, objected to the ornamental *grotteschi* forms found in Roman art (and later revived in Renaissance painting by Pinturicchio and others) on the grounds that they were not taken from reality.[117] In Pliny's *Natural History*, works of art were praised for their ability to trick the viewer into believing that was is painted is real".[118]

Pliny mentions the Roman examples of landscape frescoes in *Natural History*, and his discussion spurred the Renaissance interest in the independent landscape. Pliny writes specifically about the landscapes of the Roman painter Studius, who Pliny suggests "was the first to introduce very enchanting wall paintings with villas, harbors, landscapes, groves, woods, hills, fish ponds, canals, rivers, coastlines…"[119] Vitruvius also discussed landscape painting in Rome, explaining that Romans "adorned their walkways, because of their extensive length, with varieties of landscape…"[120] Like all classical art, landscape frescoes were judged by their ability to evoke reality, and though Pliny is clearly more partial to lofty themes like gods and heroes, he does concede that the variety of natural details delighted the eye.[121]

By the fifteenth century, no examples of ancient Roman landscape frescoes survived, but artists were likely taking inspiration from Pliny's and Vitruvius's descriptions to evoke a sense of reality and delight modern viewers. Pinturicchio was one

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117 Wohl, Hellmut. *The Aesthetics of Italian Renaissance Art: A Reconsideration of Style*,70.

118 Sarah Blake McHam, *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Italian Renaissance: The Legacy of the Natural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 116.

119 Jacob Isager, *Pliny on Art and Society: The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art* (London: Routledge, 1991), 132-3.

120 Ingrid D. Rowland, Thomas Noble Howe, and Michael Dewar,*Vitruvius: Ten Books on Architecture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 91.

121 Jex-Blake NH translation chapter 35, 116-117

of the first to adopt this classically-inspired sub-genre,[122] and his landscape frescoes were appreciated by sophisticated Roman patrons in the late Quattrocento. Vasari notes that Innocent VIII, Alexander's immediate predecessor, commissioned Pinturicchio and Andrea Mantegna to execute a series of landscapes frescoes—now lost—in his newly built Belvedere on the Vatican hill towards Monte Mario "in the Flemish style". [123] This villa, which was undoubtedly constructed based on ancient descriptions by Pliny and others, was the first to be built in Rome since ancient times.[124] Similarly, the frescoes were apparently the first independent landscapes to be painted in Rome since antiquity. Though these landscapes were based on classical descriptions, they were referred to as being in the Flemish style because of their copious, detailed style mirrored that of International Gothic paintings. This made sense, considering, as previously discussed, Quattrocento humanists appreciated International Gothic paintings for their supposed similarity to classical art. This reaffirms the link between the International Gothic style and ancient Roman art.

In his *History of the Popes,* Ludwig von Pastor notes that if Innocent VIII appreciated this type of art, he was "not so devoid of artistic feeling as he is so often represented to have been."[125] Pastor's statement implies that educated viewers in the latter half of the century in Rome understood the classical origins of landscape frescoes

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122 McHam, *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Italian Renaissance: The Legacy of the Natural History*, 172.

123 Vasari, Giorgio. *The Lives of the Artists*. Translated by Julia Conaway Bondanella and Peter E. Bondanella, 255.

124 McHam, *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Italian Renaissance: The Legacy of the Natural History*, 172.

125 Pastor, Ludwig. *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages. Drawn from the Secret Archives of the Vatican and Other Original Sources*, V, 167.

and appreciated their detail and adherence to naturalism, much the same way humanist praised Gentile and Pisanello in the former half of the century.

Martin Kemp has pointed out that the complex, dense, and sumptuous works of the International Gothic were "precisely the kind of picture[s] which best lent [them]selves to *ekphrasis*, a genre of word-painting the humanists adapted from such ancients sources as Lucian and Apollonius."[126] Ekphrasis was a rhetorical device invented in the second-century by Greek rhetorician Hermogenes of Tarsos in which one medium, writing, sought to describe the media of the visual arts and evoke their essence. It was extremely popular in the circle of Manuel Chrysoloras, a Byzantine humanist. Baxandall points out that Chrysoloras and his students dedicated many ekphrases to Pisanello, and there was conformity between Pisanello's narrative style and the narrative style of Renaissance ekphrases[127]

Guarino da Verona, a pupil of Chrysoloras's and an eminent humanist scholar, writes in an ekphrasis of Pisanello's descriptive, naturalistic work:

> With line and color you rival nature's handiwork…whether it be that you are depicting birds or beasts, raging seas or quiet lakes; we could even vow that we see the white gleam of the foam, or hear the waves of thunder on the shore…if you set the action in spring, varied flowers smile in green meadows, the old brilliance returns to the trees, and the hills bloom; here the air quivers with the sound of birds."[128]

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126 Martin Kemp, "'Equal Excellences': Lomazzo And The Explanation of Individual Style in the Visual ArtS," *Renaissance Studies* 1, no. 1 (1987): 12.

127 Baxandall, M. *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition,* 96.

128 Baxandall, Michael. *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition,* 96.

In his *Comparison of Old and New Rome*, Manuel Chrysoloras provides a similar description of Roman triumphal arches, illustrating the ways in which humanists conceptualized the art of the International Gothic artists as being analogous with classical art. They found the same descriptive, ornamental elements in the former that they admired in the latter, and in this sense, the ornateness of the International Gothic was inherently Renaissance in nature.

This also establishes the foundation for understanding Pinturicchio's style, specifically in the context of the Borgia apartments. Though humanist writers never explicitly discussed his work, the stylistic components of his Borgia frescoes echo those of Classical and Renaissance rhetorical theory. This parallel, though not an exact one-to-one correlation, would have enticed learned viewers, who would have been able to identify and enjoy the works' sophistication. As Pastor mentioned, Pinturicchio's work did employ the same lyrical, detailed landscapes with copious and naturalistic details, which is probably best embodied in the Borgia frescoes by *Susanna and the Elders* from The *Sala dei Santi* (fig. 16). One can imagine a humanist ekphrasis describing the detailed flora and fauna in the work and praising the ornate style's overall ability to evoke a sense of true reality.

Indeed, compare Guarino's aforementioned ekphrasis about Pisanello to *Susanna and the Elders*. Like Guarino's description of Pisanello's works, *Susanna and the Elders* is similarly naturalistic in its details and copious in their use. In Guarino's own words, Pinturicchio's fresco features "varied flowers" that "smile in the green meadows." Guarino mentions he could "put out a hand to wipe the sweat from the brow of the toiling peasant", suggesting the pathos with which Pisanello is able to depict his human figures. One could just as easily write about wiping the tears from Susanna's face, so genuine is her distress. The whole of Guarino's ekphrasis focuses on how successfully Pisanello is

able to evoke reality through details, particularly those in nature. Pinturicchio shows similar care in rendering the landscape in *Susanna*, and the intricate flora and fauna that populate the fore and backgrounds lend a sense of realism that likely would have delighted humanists like Guarino.

PINTURICCHIO, ART CRITICISM, AND CLASSICAL RHETORIC

In the fifteenth century imagination, the visual arts were linked very closely to the written word, and amongst the elite the former was understood and enjoyed in terms of the latter. Humanist writings on art seemed to reflect the sentiments of Greek sophist Philostratus the Younger, who wrote, "paintings are wordless poems".[129] More specifically, the visual arts, particularly painting, were conceived in rhetorical terms, which is reflected in the treatises on painting that emerged during the Quattrocento.

One of the earliest and most important was Leon Battista Alberti's *Della Pittura* , the first of his three treatises on the major arts, including painting, architecture, and sculpture. The treatise was written in Latin in 1435 and known to have circulated among humanists of the era. It was later translated into Italian as *De Pictura*. In *Della Pittura*, Alberti argues that artists should make themselves familiar with poets and orators, as knowledge of their works essentially lead to the best or most successful paintings.[130] Alberti understood paintings in geometrical rather than rhetorical terms, dividing the art into three parts: circumscription or outlining bodies; composition; and reception of light, which resulted in the creation of tones and hues. Though not directly reflective of rhetorical theory, this tripartite form of art criticism judged a work of art as the sum of its

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129 Baxandall, M. *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition* ,93.

130 Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting and On Sculpture. The Latin Texts of De Pictura and De Statua*, ed. Cecil Grayson (London: Phaidon, 1972), 97.

parts, and this type of criticism was not unlike the way rhetoricians judged orations. Bartolomeo Fazio, another Quattrocento humanist, distributed his treatise *De Pictoribus* in 1456.[131]

Like Alberti, Fazio divided the judgment of art into three categories. Fazio's categories, *inventio, dispositio,* and *elocutio*, correspond to three of the five canons of rheotorical theory. *Inventio* (invention) was the forethought an orator would in employ to produce a well-crafted and effective argument. This could be considered analogous to preparatory sketches for a painting, in which an artist conceives a composition and arrangement of figures before beginning the actual creation process. *Dispositio* was the organization or arrangement of an argument, which relates very directly to the composition of a painting, as Fazio points out. *Elocutio,* more than eloquent speech, connoted style, which was an easy parallel to style in painting. *Elocutio,* in rhetorical terms, ranged from plain style (*subtile*) to high (*florida or gravis*), as Quintilian discussed in *Instutio oratoria*.[132] In Quattrocento painting, this may be related to the plain style of Massacio (fig. 45) compared to the more ornate style of Gentile da Fabriano, Pisanello, or even Pinturicchio. This rhetorical nuance may aid in our larger understanding of the humanists' acceptance of Pinturicchio's highly ornate works.

Perhaps the most important contribution to humanist art criticism in the fifteenth century was the work of Cristoforo Landino. Landino translated Pliny's *Natural History* in 1476.[133] In his 1480 introduction to Dante's *Inferno*, he copied Pliny's method of describing art in terms adapted from social or literary contexts and applied this method to

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131 Baxandall, M. *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition*, 110.

132 Wohl, H. *The Aesthetics of Italian Renaissance Art: A Reconsideration of Style,* 238.

133 McHam, S. *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Italian Renaissance: The Legacy of the Natural History*, 123.

artists of his own day.[134] Though not all of either Pliny or Landino's terms correlated directly to elements from rhetorical theory, there were obvious overlaps that reflected the important influence of rhetoric on the visual arts. Some of Landino's most salient terms for praising art—*ornato, varieta, copia*—were derived from the canons of rhetoric established by Quintilian and others[135]. It is through these specific terms that we may begin to understand Pinturicchio's Borgia frescoes.

Ornatus was one of the most important components of classical rhetorical theory, and its concept formed the basis of the term *ornato* in Renaissance art criticism. *Ornatus* was a complex and multi-faceted concept that in many ways encompasses other more specific elements, like *copia* or *varieta*. Book VIII of Quintilian's *Education of an Orator* provides the most basic explanation for what *ornatus* signifies. He explains that the two virtues are language are clarity and correctness, and that ornateness is whatever is more than clear and correct.[136] This includes not only what I will later discuss as *ornamenti* and what we might understand as embellishment, but also, according to Quintilian, "sharpness, richness, liveliness, charm, and finish."[137] Quintilian also defends *ornatus* against those:

> who hold that arguments should always be expressed in language which is not only pure, lucid, and distinct, but also as free as possible from all elevation and ornateness. I readily admit that arguments should be distinct and clear…but if the subject is one of real importance, every kind of

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134 Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 131.

135 McHam, S. *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Italian Renaissance: The Legacy of the Natural History*, 123.

136 Baxandall, M. *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, 131.

137 Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* V,xiv, 33.

> ornament should be employed, as long as it does nothing to obscured our meaning.[138]

Wohl points out the relationship between the visual *ornato* of the Renaissance and the classical literary *ornatus*, noting that "the *ornato* tradition deployed resources of pictorial refinement, ornamentation, and detailed description.[139] While *ornato* refers specifically to the visual arts and *ornatus* to the rhetorical device, they describe a similar phenomenon within their respective media. Just as orations were embellished to make them compelling to the listener, artists like Pinturicchio could embellish their works with gold, *pastiglia,* or other devices and similarly impress their viewers. As Quintilian establishes, *ornatus* may lend additional brilliance,[140] and this is also true of *ornato*, as the Borgia frescoes show. In this sense, we may understand that on one level *ornato* describes embellishment. According to Quintilian, *ornatus* also more broadly contributed piquancy, polish, richness, liveliness, charm, and finish.[141] While some of these components—particularly piquancy—do not translate to visual ornateness, *ornato* would have similarly added polish, richness, liveliness, charm, and finish to a work.

Landino also mentions the importance of *ornamenti*, which aligns most closely with what modern viewers may understand as ornamentation. Landino praises Filippo Lippi for his use of *ornamenti* of every kind, "[w]hether imitated from reality or invented."[142] *Ornamenti,* Landino suggests, lend *grazia* (grace) and are *vezzoso*, which is

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138 Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* V,xiv, 33.

139 Wohl, H. *The Aesthetics of Italian Renaissance Art: A Reconsideration of Style,* 244.

140 Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* VIII, iii, 61

141 Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* VIII, iii, 131

142 Baxandall, M. *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, 132.

best translated as blithe or charming[143]. Quintilian expounds on the importance of *gratia*, the rhetorical iteration of Landino's *grazia,* in providing ornateness. Prose, like a statue, is better when graceful and dynamic versus being stiff and rigid.[144] *Grazia* was part of the corpus of contemporary art criticism. Renaissance literary critics considered *grazia to be* the product of *varieta* and *ornato*.[145] The term *grazia* was drawn from Quattrocento vernacular more that the classical art criticism of Pliny. However, it related the Latin *gratiosus*, which had the connotation of pleasing in general. In this way, gracefulness within composition contributed to the overall pleasure of a given work. An oration was considered successful when it could delight, because this delight prompted the listener to pay greater attention and ultimately be more persuaded by the argument; likewise, in contemporary art theory, painting that pleased the eye could similarly captivate a viewer, making a work more effective in its visual argument. *Grazia* was a key component for inspiring such delight. Leonardo da Vinci wrote about the importance of *grazia* in composing figures, explaining that graceful figures produced elegant charm within a composition. He writes:

> The parts of the body should be arranged with *gratia*, with a view to the effect you want the figure to make. If you want it to display elegant charm (*leggiadria),* you should make it [1] delicate and elongated, [2] without too much exhibition of muscles, and [2a] the few muscles you do purposefully show, make them soft, that is, with little distinctness and their shadows not much tinted, and [3] the limbs, specially the arms, relaxed—that is to say, [4] no part of the body is a straight line with the part next to it.

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143 Baxandall, M. *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, 147.

144 Baxandall, M. *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style,* 132.

145 Baxandall, M. *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, 131.

By Leonardo's definition, Pinturicchio's figures exhibit a high degree of *grazia*. Consider any one of the frescoes for the the Sala dei Santi I have already discussed. In *Susanna and the Elders* (fig. 20) Susanna is slender and delicately rendered. Her pose is fluid, her limbs long, and her form softly modeled, just as Leonardo discusses. She stands in a modified contrapposto, and despite the struggle she engages in with the two elders, there are no sharp angles in her body; her figure remains graceful.

Saint Catherine from *The Disputation* is similarly graceful. She holds her slender hands in front of her in a gesture of explanation, ticking off the points of her argument on slender fingers. Like Susanna, she is tall and slim, her body showing no real muscular definition beyond simple outlines. Catherine's costume, though comprised of several separate garments, does not add bulk to her form. This is true for all of the figures, whose clothing suggests volume through their drapery while simultaneously outlining the contours of the form underneath. Consider the figure in yellow just right of center in *The Disputation of Saint Catherine* (fig. 467 still visible, keeping him form from appearing bulky.

In *The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian* (fig. 21) the saint's figure is similarly delicate. His contrapposto pose, which is contrasted by the rigid marble pillar to which he has been tethered, keeps his form from seeming too stiff. Like all of Pinturicchio's figures, Sebastian is lean, and though his torso is bare, his musculature is not over-emphasized. Sebastian tormentors are equally as gracious is their various poses, and they too are softly-modelled and slight in build.

Vezzoso is perhaps a term too abstract to form any substantive influence on our understanding of the importance of ornamentation. However, it does suggest the delight ornamentation can inspire in a viewer. *Vezzoso* is a term that Landino adapted for a

contemporary social context, and thus is neither a component of rhetorical theory nor a term he adapted from Pliny's classical art criticism. However, Quintilian and others mentioned the idea of ornamentation producing delight within the viewer, as I will discuss in greater detail later on in this chapter.

Ornato is a critical part of understanding the humanist value of Pinturicchio's work. Pinturicchio's style is defined by its extensive use of embellishment, particularly his employment of *pastiglia*, gilding, and classically inspired *grotteschi.* The gold introduces an element of courtly splendor that also characterized the International Gothic style. It is augmented by Pinturicchio's use of *pastiglia*, which transforms the decorative elements of the two-dimensional fresco into an opulent three-dimensional object.

The *grotteschi* are perhaps the most important form of ornamentation in the Borgia frescoes. Discovered in Nero's Domus Aurea in Rome just thirty years before, *grotteschi* directly recalled the classical past, making them highly topical for Renaissance artists and their humanist patrons. Furthermore, these new *all'antica* elements are a large part of what distinguishes Pinturicchio's style from those of earlier Quattrocento artists like Gentile da Fabriano. This type of *ornamenti* redefined the visual rhetoric Quattrocento and Cinquecento painting, particularly in Rome. Pinturicchio seems to be one the first artists to employ them, dating back to his della Rovere frescoes from the 1480s in Santa Maria della Pace in Rome (fig. 48), His continual reliance on *grotteschi* as ornamental devices conferred the authority of the classical world and were used to appealed to humanist viewers, as Ian Verstegen pointed out when discussing their use within the della Rovere chapel in his book on the della Rovere family. He writes, "The

discreetly injected classical elements…reflected trends of late Quattrocento humanist Rome and suggested a patron with classical taste and, by extension, erudition."[146]

By the early Cinquecento, *grotteschi* had begun to emerge in a number of artists' works, both young and established. In one of his last commissions before he died, Filippino Lippi's used *grotteschi* to embellish the fictive architecture within his *Annunciation* fresco from Carafa chapel in Santa Maria Sopra Minerva in Rome, painted in 1493 (fig 36). Raphael also used *grotteschi,* along with gold leaf, in the ceiling frescoes in Julius II's Vatican apartments, particularly in the Stanza della Segnatura from around 1508 (fig 49).

Both these examples come from the first part of the sixteenth century, and they may in fact be partially inspired by Pinturicchio's extensive use of *grotteschi* in the Borgia apartments. Olivero Carafa, Lippi's patron and the Carafa chapel's namesake, was an important member of Alexander's curia. The Carafa fresco was completed shortly after Pinturicchio's Borgia frescoes, and in 1493 Alexander made a point to visit the newly consecrated Carafa chapel after celebrating the Feast of the Annunciation at Santa Maria sopra Minerva.[147] He later issued a papal bull that offered plenary indulgences for visiting the chapel.[148] The Carafa *Annunciation* marks Lippi's only use of *grotteschi,* suggesting their inclusion may have been a choice of the patron. There is perhaps not enough documentation to suggest the Carafa chapel was directly inspired by Pinturicchio's work, but their shared sphere of influence suggests a correlation between Pinturicchio's use of *grotteschi* and Lippi's. The link between Raphael's Stanze and

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146 Ian Verstegen, *Patronage and Dynasty: The Rise of the Della Rovere in Renaissance Italy* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2007), 76.

147 Gail Geiger, *Fillippino Lippi's Carafa Chapel: Renaissance Art in Rome*(Ann Arbor: Edward Brothers, 1986), 46.

148 Geiger, G. *Fillippino Lippi's Carafa Chapel: Renaissance Art in Rome,* 47.

Pinturicchio's Borgia *grotteschi* is similarly circumstantial. We know that, like Pinturicchio, Raphael visited the Domus Aurea and saw the classical examples of *grotteschi* first-hand.[149] This could mean that he was directly copying what he had seen in the Domus Aurea, However, we also know that Julius lived in the Borgia apartments while his own *Stanze* were being constructed,[150] and this could have led the pope to suggeste that Raphael include some *grotteschi* in his own frescoes. Raphael's coupling of gold leaf with the ceiling *grotteschi* certainly recalls Pinturicchio's Borgia frescoes.

As we have noted, *grotteschi* symbolically conferred the authority of the classical world. However, as elements of *ornato* or, more specifically, *ornamenti*, they also contributed to the sophistication of Pinturicchio's overall aesthetic. *Grotteschi* were also, as Friedrich Piel argued in *Die Ornament-Grotteske in der italienischen Renaissance*, spatially intricate, amplifying the viewer's experience by giving the eye something complex to contemplate.[151] They challenge the mind's conception of positive and negative space, and defy traditional pictorial orientation. They were on walls and ceilings alike, and some assumed quasi-animorphic shapes with a head and tail, Tthey had no fixed directionality for reading. Their very complexity added a level of sophistication that relates to the way *ornatus* functioned in classical rhetoric.

Grotteschi also served as a vehicle for incorporating the bull, a symbol of the Borgia family, organically into the design of the rooms. Consider the *grotteschi* on the fictive triumphal arch of *The Annunciation* in the Hall of the Mysteries of the Faith (fig. 26). In addition to more abstract shapes along the columns, Pinturicchio sets two

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149 Dacos, Nicole. *La Découverte De La Domus Aurea Et La Formation Des Grotesques À La Renaissance*, 176.

150 John Shearman, *The Vatican Stanze: Functions and Decoration*(London: Ely House, 1972), 15.

151 Friedrich Piel, *Die Ornament-Grotteske in Der Italienischen Renaissance* (1962), 172.

grotteschi bulls on top of the arch, linking the Borgia family to Imperial Rome through the architecture and the classical imagery of the *grotteschi* themselves. The *grotteschi* bulls are repeated in the above the scene of the *Annunciation* as well, reasserting this connection.

Photographs of the frescoes rarely manage to capture Pinturicchio's lavish embellishment and sumptuous color. Consider the ceiling decorations in the Hall of the Saints (fig. 50). The two bulls stand facing one another, two trumpeting angels and a fountain between them. All of the figures stand in low relief, their gold plaiting further emphasizing their three-dimensional projection into space. The use of gold also awards the bull a particular grandeur amongst the other ornamental symbols throughout the room. Their flat but rich lapis lazuli backdrop further dramatizes the golden bulls.

In *Susanna and the Elders,* the sculptural foundation behind Susanna and her tormentors lends atmospheric prospective and provides something sumptuous for the eye to feast on. Like the bulls from the ceiling, the cherubs adorning the foundation assume three-dimensional depth, giving the architectural foundation a realistic form. Pinturicchio unifies the scene with generous passages of gold elsewhere, like Susanna's discarded robe, her halo, and the fence that surrounds the garden. These details would have caught the light, making the elements of the scene more legible and lending a sumptuousness that delights the eye.

The triumphal arch in *The Disputation of Saint Catherine of Alexandria* is similarly sculptural in its use of *pastiglia*, and Pinturicchio's uses gold leaf to accent the intricate fabrics of the figures' costumes, the Emperor's throne, and the flora of the landscape. These types of gold accents were not unique to Pinturicchio's work. Many of the Sistine Chapel frescoes, including *The Punishment of Korah and the Stoning of Moses and Aaron* by Sandro Botticelli and *The Adoration of the Golden Calf* by Cosimo

Rosselli, employ this type of detailing, which enhances a fresco's overall luminosity (figs. 36&51). However, the degree to which Pinturicchio employs gold and *pastiglia* sets his lavish style apart. His use of *pastiglia* is most prominent in the large Roman triumphal arch in the center of the composition, particularly in the incorporated columns, the figural capitals, and, most importantly, the bull on top. As in the ceiling embellishments, the *pastiglia* and gilding emphasize the most thematically important element within the composition.

Vasari later complained that the *pastiglia* on the arch ruined the atmospheric perspective and compromised the sophistication of the composition. He writes:

> [a]fter executing in these rooms a scene from the life of Saint Catherine of Alexandria, he depicted the arches of Rome in relief with the figures in such a way that while the figures are in the foreground and the buildings in the background, the receding objects seem nearer than those which should be larger to the eye—the most tremendous heresy in our craft. [152]

However, as an element of *ornato*, Pinturicchio's use of *pastiglia* and gold certainly contributes added brilliance, particularly when one considers how they would have looked by candlelight. The gold would have glittered, and the *pastiglia* would have given the frescoes illusionistic depth. As noted earlier, Vasari also equated the use of gold with gaudiness or lack of fundamental skill. However, both Quintilian and Alberti discussed how proper employment of *ornato* offered pleasure, indicating that splendor and its ensuing delight was the result of sophistication, not ineptitude. I will discuss this concept of *ornato* producing pleasure, as well as *ornato*'s contribution to the element of decorum in rhetoric and art, later in this chapter.

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152 Vasari G., *The Lives of the Artists*, trans. Julia Conaway. Bondanella and Peter E. Bondanella, 254.

Grotteschi, more even than gold and *pastiglia*, were the most important form of ornament employed in the Borgia suite. These *grotteschi* pervade the six rooms, unifying them and continually reminding visitors of Pinturicchio's understanding of *all'antica* style of painting and, by extension, Alexander's erudition and *romanitas*.

Pinturicchio first used *grotteschi* in his decoration of the Domenico della Rovere chapel in Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome (fig. 8). Pinturicchio's *grotteschi*, both in the della Rovere chapel and the Borgia apartments, quote those found in the Domus Aurea. However, rather than creating slavish copies, Pinturicchio invents his own fictive shapes. According to the sixteenth-century writer Anton Francesco Doni, this was one of the important parts of *grotteschi* as forms of ornamentation.[153] They were an expression of *capriccio*, a way for an artist to express his individual creativity and delight a viewer's imagination. In this way, *grotteschi* also contributed to Landino's concept of the *vezzoso*.

If we return to Quintilian's definition of *ornato* as being anything that contributes more than clarity and correctness, the elements of *copia* and *varietà* are two more components of *ornato* that art critics like Alberti and Landino valued. In *De Pittura*, Alberti defines *copia* as a volume of content, whereas and *varietà* was diversity of content. According to Alberti, a composition exhibited *copia* when "there are mingled together old men, young men, boys, women, girls, horses sheep buildings, tractors of country, and so on."[154] *Copia* is furthermore an important canon of rhetorical theory. In Erasmus's rhetorical treatise *De Duplici Copia Verborum ac Rerum* (On the double copiousness of words and things*)*, he discusses the importance of copiousness in an oration at great length, suggesting that one ought to vary an idea by putting it into

153 Wohl, H. *The Aesthetics of Italian Renaissance Art: A Reconsideration of Style,* 245.
154 Alberti, L. B. *On Painting and On Sculpture. The Latin Texts of De Pictura and De Statua*. Edited by Cecil Grayson, 78.

different forms and figures and vary arguments using different strategies to keep them compelling. Though Erasmus's work was not published until 1512, nearly ten years after the completion of Pinturicchio's Borgia frescoes, he began conceptualizing the work in the 1490s, during which time publishing style manuals was in full fashion among humanist scholars.[155]

In the Sala dei Santi, Pinturicchio embraces the concept of *copia* enthusiastically, and each of the frescoes teems with a profusion of matter. *Susanna and the Elders,* in particular, provides an example of Pinturrichio's application of *copia* (fig. 20). As Sabine Poeschel points out in her analysis of the fresco's iconographic program, the animals in the scene—including a deer, stag, rabbit, monkey, and hare—symbolize the immorality and lust traditionally associated with Venus, while the moneybag makes reference to the immoral act of prostitution.[156] Beyond their symbolic purpose, all these elements help to provide *copia* within the immediate scene featuring Susanna and her tormentors. Though any one or two of the animals could have adequately represented lust, Pinturicchio provides five. The animals also help populate the scene, and providing diversity as well as *copia*. Beyond them, two groups of figures form a dynamic scene that include men, women, and horses, all set against one of Pinturicchio's copiously descriptive landscapes. In comparing the composition to Alberti's definition of *copia*, we may see that Pinturicchio applies the concept successfully. The sheer abundance of visual elements serves to amplify the fresco's argument, making it more compelling, the way Erasmus argued *copia* should function in writing.

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155 Eramus, "Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style (De Duplici Copia Verborum Ac Rerum Commentarii Duo).," in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, trans. Betty Knot, vol. 24, 280.
156 Sabine Poeschel, *Alexander Maximus: Das Bildprogramm Des Appartamento Borgia Im Vatikan* (Weimar: VDG, 1999), 142.

Like *copia*, *varieta* was a concept borrowed from rhetorical theory, referred to as varietas in Latin. In discussing the merits of *varieta* in rhetorical discourse, Greek humanist scholar George of Trebizond wrote:

> For it is evident that variety is exceedingly useful and pleasant…it both strengthens one's case and gives delight to the spectator…if we want to speak well and attractively, we should studiously, diligently, and carefully seek for a variety of discourse.[157]

This statement once again touches on the importance of inspiring delight within a spectator, and reveals the importance variety had in rhetorical theory. The concept was quickly translated into artistic terms, and Alberti and Landino both expounded on the importance of *varieta* in painting.[158] In painting, *varieta* meant a diversity of colors, poses, figures, etc. It lent believability to narrative scenes and created more dynamic and engaging compositions. Similar to the use of variety in rhetoric, the use of *varietà* in painting was ultimately meant to convince viewers.

Consider *The Disputation of Saint Catherine of Alexandria* in terms of its use of *varietà* (fig. 16). Similar to *Susanna and the Elders*, the scene exhibits *copia* through the sheer volume of diverse elements, including human figures, animals, and architectural elements, all set against a vivid landscape. However, the great cast of characters present in *The Disputation of Saint Catherine* offers Pinturicchio the opportunity to show his mastery of *varietà.* One of the most important components of *varietà*, according to Alberti, was the diversity of figural action within a composition. He describes the ideal multi-figure scene thus:

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157 Baxandall, M. *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition, 1350-1450* , 94.

158 Baxandall, M. *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style,* 137.

> Some will stand upright and show all their face, with their arms high and hands spread joyfully, standing on one foot. Others will have their face turned away and their arms let fall, their feet together; and thus each character will have its own attitude and curve of the limbs: some will sit, others rest on one knee, others lie down.[159]

In *The Disputation of Saint Catherine,* the figures assume an assortment of poses while in engaging in unique activities. Emperor Maxentius leans forward on his throne, listening as Catherine entreats with him. The onlookers who form a semi-circle around the two central figures react individually. Some discuss with their neighbors while others consult texts. Though they are, for the most part, shown in three quarter view facing the two main figures, Pinturicchio includes several figures in profile, Emperor Maxentius included. He also shows his mastery of foreshortening by including a man on horseback who faces almost entirely away from the viewer. This diversity keeps the eye stimulated as it moves through the composition while simultaneously creating a more realistic and thus compelling narrative. Pinturicchio is similarly diverse in his use of patterns, taking great pains to vary one intricately embellished garment from another. His attention to texture also allows him to diversify his use of color, another important element of pictorial *varieta.*

On the opposite wall, the fresco depicting *The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian* shows an equal dedication to the notion of *varieta* (fig. 21). There are six men within the composition who are, in principle, performing the same task; that is, executing Saint Sebastian by shooting him with arrows. However, Pinturicchio finds a way to vary their individual actions. The man at the far left stands surveying the scene, hand raised to shield his eyes from the sun. Beside him a man has just loosed an arrow while another

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159 Alberti, L. B. *On Painting and On Sculpture. The Latin Texts of De Pictura and De Statua*. Edited by Cecil Grayson, 65.

man stands a ways off, restringing his bow. To the left of Saint Sebastian, we see one man aiming, another nocking an arrow, and two more observing. This *varietà* creates dynamism within the scene while simultaneously lending realism. The result, then, is a composition that is more persuasive in its narrative and more pleasurable to look at, functioning just as the rhetorical device of *varietà* is meant to.

When one breaks down Pinturicchio's style in the Borgia frescoes into individual components, one can easily see the ways in which his art aligns with the rhetorically inspired art criticism of the day. This would have made the frescoes appealing to learned viewers, who likely would have read, understood, and enjoyed works like these as visual orations. We may understand the lavishness and sumptuousness that defines Pinturicchio's Borgia style as exhibiting two final elements of rhetorical theory, which are *decorum* and *delectatio. Delectatio* signified delight, and according to Quintilian, *delactatio* was a product of *ornatus*. *Decorum* and *delectatio* are the final two ways in which we may understand the appropriateness of the Borgia frescoes' style.

In book eight of the *Institutio oratoria* Quintilian, discusses the importance of ornament as a tool to lend persuasiveness to an argument by inciting delight. He writes,

for when our audience finds it a pleasure to listen, their attention and their readiness to believe what they hear are both alike increased, while they are generally filled with delight [delectatio] and sometimes even transported by admiration.[160]

We may thus understand that sumptuous aspect of the room's style was not antithetical to classical or humanist rhetoric. Vasari, as previously mentioned, condemned

160 Quntilian, *Institutio oratoria*, VIII, iii, 1-5

Pinturicchio for his use of gold, which he considered a tawdry device employed to please the unsophisticated viewer. However, rhetorical theory seems to underscore the pleasurable aspect, the *delectatio*, of a highly ornamented work. This is ultimately a difficult concept to discuss, as subjective tastes will interpret style differently. However, for most contemporary viewers, the Borgia frescoes undoubtedly inspired a sense of wonder. The delicate passages of gold in the figures' clothing, the landscapes, and the architectural elements would have reflected candlelight, giving each room a luminous glow. Pinturicchio's deep blues, bright reds, and intricate patterns would have dazzled the eye. The many ornaments, including the *grotteschi*, provided ample entertainment. Each of these elements lends delight, and together they would have ultimately heralded Alexander's importance. While the element of delight might seem superfluous, it is not without purpose. As Quintilian mentioned, inspiring delight within the audience was an important tool of persuasion, and in the case of the Borgia frescoes, *delectatio* is also grounded by the concept of *decorum.*

Vasari as criticized Florentine painter Cosimo Rosselli, for his extensive use of gold in his Sistine frescoes, particularly *The Adoration of the Golden Calf* (fig. 50) Vasari attributed the application of gold to ineptitude on the part of the artist and lack of sophisticated taste of the part of the patron. He makes these sentiments clear in his anecdote about Rosselli's Sistine frescoes, which Vasari reviled but which Pope Sixtus IV apparently adored. I have referred to this passage before, but it is worth quoting in full here:

His Holiness went to see them[the Sistine wall frescoes]; and each of the painters had done his utmost to merit the said prize and honor. Cosimo, feeling himself weak in invention and draughtsmanship, had sought to conceal his shortcomings by covering his work with the finest ultramarine blues and other lively colors, and had illuminated his

scenes with a plentiful amount of gold, so that there was no tree, or plant, or drapery, or cloud, that was not thus illuminated; for he was convinced that the Pope, like a man who knew little of that art, must therefore give him the prize of victory. When the day arrived on which the works of all were to be unveiled, that of Cosimo was seen with the rest, and was scorned and ridiculed with much laughter and jeering by all the other craftsmen, who all mocked him instead of having compassion on him. But the scorners turned out to be the scorned, for, as Cosimo had foreseen, those colors at the first glance so dazzled the eyes of the Pope, who had little knowledge of such things, although he took no little delight in them, that he judged the work of Cosimo to be much better than that of the others. And so, causing the prize to be given to him, he bade all the others cover their pictures with the best blues that could be found, and to pick them out with gold, to the end that they might be similar to those of Cosimo in coloring and in richness. Whereupon the poor painters, in despair at having to satisfy the small intelligence of the Holy Father, set themselves to spoil all the good work that they had done; and Cosimo laughed at the men who had just been laughing at his methods.[161]

However, when one considers the rhetorical concept of *decorum*, it becomes easy to see how those well-versed in classical thought would have embraced the lavishness of Pinturicchio's Borgia frescoes. I will clarify here that while *decorum* is a rhetorical concept, it was translated into Renaissance artistic theory, where it was referred to as *decoro.*[162] In terms of art criticism, *decoro* can be used to describe any number of concepts, including ornamentation and splendor. However, in Aristotelian and Ciceronian

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161 Vasari G., *The Lives of the Artists*, trans. Julia Conaway. Bondanella and Peter E. Bondanella, 268.

162 Wohl, H. *The Aesthetics of Italian Renaissance Art: A Reconsideration of Style*, 67.

thought, *decorum* refers specifically to the consistency between style and subject.[163] In the third book of his treatise *Rhetorica*, Aristotle writes, "your language will be appropriate if it corresponds to its subject. 'Correspondence to subject' means that we must neither speak casually about weighty matters, nor solemnly about trivial ones."[164]

The sentiment that style should reflect tone was easily translated from rhetoric to the visual arts, and it was a concept that was essential to Renaissance artistic theory.[165] Alberti, for example, argued for a decorum based on the rules of poetry for paintings' suitability for various types of building.[166] He writes:

> Both painting and poetry vary in kind. The type that portrays the great deeds of great men, worthy of memory, differing from that which describes the habits of private citizens, and again from those depicting the life of peasants…the first, which is majestic in character, should be used for public buildings, while the last mentioned will be suitable for gardens..."[167]

Though Alberti was talking about agreement between subject and placement, his sentiments still reflect the underlying rhetorical principle *decorum,* where content, whether thematic or stylistic, reflecting setting and tone. We see this emphasis on agreement time and again in Renaissance art. In his book, *Fra Angelico and His Times,* art historian Giulio Carlo Argan noted the important relationship between tone and style in Italian Renaissance paintings. Argan compares two different versions of *The*

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163 Salvatore Battaglia and Giorgio Bàrberi Squarotti, *Grande Dizionario Della Lingua Italiana* (Torino: Unione Tipografico-editrice Torinese, 1961), 95-7.

164 Aristotle III,7.

165 Wohl, H. *The Aesthetics of Italian Renaissance Art: A Reconsideration of Style*, 68.

166 McHam, S. *Pliny and the Artistic Culture of the Italian Renaissance: The Legacy of the Natural History,* 172.

167 Robert Tavernor, *On Alberti and the Art of Building* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 209.

Coronation of the Virgin by Fra Angelico, the lavish Louvre altarpiece and the Spartan fresco from one of the monks' cells at the convent of San Marco in Florence (figs. 52&34), to demonstrate how tone and style interact. Argan's comparison illustrates how the artist adapted his style to suite the context and purpose of each commissioned works, essentially exercising decorum. Argan suggests the Louvre altarpiece, with its use of gold, bright colors, and intricate patterns, has a "festive character", and it has a more worldly as opposed to intensely sacred tone.[168] This lavishness would have suited the highly public nature of the altarpiece, also serving to reflect the wealth of the patron. The convent fresco is comparatively simple, featuring only eight figures, including Jesus and the Virgin, set against a plain backdrop comprising of little more than clouds. Unlike the altarpiece, which was meant to impress, the cell fresco was meant to inspire contemplation and prayer. In terms of decorum, it was appropriate that the latter version of *The Coronation* be simple to suit the nature of the space for which it was created. The comparison provides insight into how the concept of decorum affected style in Renaissance painting,

To understand why Pinturicchio's decoration of the Borgia apartments was decorous, one must consider the environment in which he was working. By the opening of the sixteenth century in Rome, cardinals and especially popes were figures of great temporal power and wealth, which was reflected, in part, by the type of art they commissioned. Consider the treatise of humanist Paolo Cortesi from 1513 entitled *De Cardinalatu,* which set forth standards for the lives of cardinals for context. In *De Cardinalatu*, Cortesi discussed that cardinals' palaces ought to have "dignified

168 Giulio Carlo Argan, *Fra Angelico and His times* (Skira, Italy, 1955), 67.

splendor"[169] and serve as a concrete projection of their importance and power. Cortesi's contention in underlined, whether intentionally or unintentionally, by the concept of *decoro,* and we see the same principle at play in the Borgia apartments. As a secular space of a powerful leader, it seems appropriate that the Borgia frescoes should be so generously appointed with gold ornament. The frescoes' lavishness would have resonated with the Pope's wealth, their gold a symbol of his temporal power. As pope, Alexander was also God's earthly representative, and thus it was fitting that his surrounding should reflect the majesty of heaven.

Furthermore, a more in-depth look at the Classical rhetoric structure illustrates how the visual arts, specifically Pinturicchio's ornate Borgia frescoes, reflect Classic orations. In Classical rhetoric, orations were divided into three types, or *genera*, and each genus was designed for a different situation and thus had unique vocabulary and diction. For instance, *genus iudiciale* was a judicial oratory intended for the courtroom, and it sought to win a conviction or an acquittal.[170] *Genus deliberativum* was the *ars suadendi et disuadendi*—the politicians art.[171] It was meant for assemblies like the senate, where the orator sought to persuade their audience to take actions, such as whether or not to go to war. Perhaps the most relevant *genus* to this discussion of rhetorical theory in the visual arts is the *genus demonstrativum,* also referred to as epideictic. It was intended for ceremonial use, and it was employed to arouse sentiments of appreciation or disgust for

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169 John F. D'Amico, *Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome: Humanists and Churchmen on the Eve of the Reformation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 14.

170 O'Malley, John W. *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome: Rhetoric, Doctrine, and Reform in the Sacred Orators of the Papal Court, C. 1450-1521*, 39.

171 O'Malley, John W. *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome: Rhetoric, Doctrine, and Reform in the Sacred Orators of the Papal Court, C. 1450-1521*, 39.

its subject.[172] This third *genus* was less structured than the other two, and as such, orations in this style were more open to interpretation.

Modern rhetorical scholar Harry Caplan pointed out that where judicial and deliberative orations sought to persuade listeners to take a specific course of action, an orator giving a demonstrative speech endeavored only to "impress his ideas upon them [his listeners], without action as a goal."[173] Epideictic orations was considered "display" oratory, where the artful construction of the oration was an end in itself.[174] The listener was meant to appreciate the beauty of the oration rather than make a decision. There was an intrinsic manner of display in epideictic, and as such it shared an affinity with the arts of poetry and song.[175]

This very much mirrors the aim of the Borgia frescoes. While the iconographic content, which I will discuss in greater depth in the following chapter, is important, the frescoes's lavishness also evokes *delactatio*, and they were meant to be enjoyed for their physical beauty. Like a ceremonial *demonstrativum* oration, they are meant to impress an idea upon the viewer. In this case, Alexander's power, both temporal and God-given.

When deconstructed, it becomes easy to read Pinturicchio's Borgia frescoes in rhetorical terms as they exhibit the same principles that dictated both classical and Renaissance rhetorical theory. Knowing, too, about the rhetorical culture that pervaded the Papal court at the dawn of the Cinquecento, we may surmise that Alexander

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172 O'Malley, John W. *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome: Rhetoric, Doctrine, and Reform in the Sacred Orators of the Papal Court, C. 1450-1521*, 39.

173 Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Cicero. (Rhetorica Ad Herennium)*, trans. Harry Caplan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954), 173.

174 O'Malley, John W. *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome: Rhetoric, Doctrine, and Reform in the Sacred Orators of the Papal Court, C. 1450-1521*, 40.

175 O'Malley, John W. *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome: Rhetoric, Doctrine, and Reform in the Sacred Orators of the Papal Court, C. 1450-1521*, 40.

was neither unaware nor unappreciative of the rhetorical underpinnings of Pinturicchio's style. With humanists giving sermons that were stylistically based on classical orations nearly every day within the Papal court, Alexander would have grown accustomed to hearing them, interpreting their meaning, and judging them on their merits. This exposure would have allowed him to understand Pinturicchio's frescoes in much the same way.

What is perhaps most important in the link between Pinturicchio's work and rhetorical theory is the way in which it alters our understanding of his use of ornamentation and gold. The element of *decorum* cannot be understated in discussion of the style of the Borgia apartments. Through these apartments, Alexander sought to make a grand statement about himself, and as such, it was fitting that Pinturicchio should outfit this visual argument with a great amount of *ornato* to convince the viewers. If Alexander wanted to make a lofty statement about himself, he had to do so in a lofty style.

The level of decoration in the Borgia frescoes is also unprecedented in Pinturicchio's work, which further emphasizes its importance. Even comparing the Borgia frescoes to those Pinturicchio painted on the ceiling of the Piccolomini library, which was probably his second most lavish work, there is little comparison; the Borgia frescoes are infinitely more sumptuous. There in an intentionality in the frescoes' lavishness which suggests that as a patron, Alexander understood the effectiveness of ornamentation and the importance of *decoro.* It is here that we may begin to understand how the style feeds the iconography and contributes to the argument the frescoes are making about Alexander. In the following chapter I will focus on the The *Sala dei Santi* and discuss how the author of the iconographic program, whether it be Alexander of an ecclesiastical advisor, used Christian, Classical, and pagan iconography to suggest Alexander's legitimacy as a successor to Saint Peter. Pinturicchio's glittering aesthetic

suggests the majesty of the saints while the frescoes' iconography situates Alexander among them as part of the divine company.

Chapter Three: Alexander Maximus: Iconography in The Sala dei Santi

Like epideictic orations, Pinturicchio's Alexandrine style was both an end in itself and a supplement to the room's visual argument. We must now seek to understand the importance of iconography. What Pinturicchio's style implies, the iconographic program in the Sala dei Santi makes explicit.

As both Randolph N. Parks and Sabine Poeschel have argued, the Sala dei Santi was likely a throne room or receiving room.[176] This means its fresco cycle would have been semi-public and intended for Rome's powerful and elite. As such, it is the room that most explicitly illustrates that which Alexander sought to suggest about himself. As Parks and Poeschel have also pointed out, the frescoes on the walls all feature saints or biblical figures who experienced divine intercessions, emphasizing Alexander's role as pope, the intercessor between God and the Christian world.

The fresco depicting *The Disputation of Saint Catherine of Alexandria*(fig. 16), which dominates the entire back wall, is particularly significant in light of the room's function. Through its detailed imagery, the *Disputation* links Alexander to the humanist interest in learning and Classical rhetoric, Emperor Constantine, Imperial Rome, the ongoing conflict with the Muslim Turks, Egyptian wisdom, and Alexander the Great. As I will discuss, *The Disputation*, along with the elaborate ceiling frescoes, forms the foundation of the Sala's visual argument.

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176 Sabine Poeschel, *Alexander Maximus: Das Bildprogramm Des Appartamento Borgia Im Vatikan* (Weimar: VDG, 1999), 80-81, N. Randolph Parks, "On The Meaning Of Pinturicchio's Sala Dei Santi,"*Art History* 2, no. 3 (1979): 295.

The aforementioned ceiling frescoes depict the Egyptian God Osiris and the Apis Bull. Though the bull—an integral part of the Borgia family's ancestral coat of arms—appears in countless iterations throughout the six rooms, the story of Osiris and the Apis bull allowed Alexander to directly integrate his family emblem into the narrative. The Borgia bull was thus imbued with all the power and prestige the Apis bull signified within Egyptian mythos, a broad concept that encompassed the mystery, sanctity, and imperial power associated with Ancient Egypt.[177] As Brian Curran points out in *The Egyptian Renaissance*, the elements encompassed within the broader notion of Egyptian mythos were still flexible enough to suit an artist or patron's agenda,[178] and Alexander was able to manipulate the imagery to further the Sala's iconographic agenda.

The Apis bull was believed by the Egyptians to be the incarnation of Osiris, and the interchangeability of the Borgia bull and the Apis bull implied that Alexander was also an earthly manifestation of the divine. The ceiling frescoes also made reference to Romulus and the foundation of Rome, legitimating Alexander as a rightful Roman ruler. Just as the wall frescoes featured religious themes with integrated secular imagery, the ceiling frescoes featured select Christian imagery that established a lineage from Ancient Egyptian mythology and wisdom to Christian doctrine.

This type of imagery would have been well received. By the end of the Quattrocento in Rome, the revival of Ancient Egyptian culture was at its apex.[179] The Borgia frescoes, along with the narrative *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* and its

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177 Brian A. Curran, *The Egyptian Renaissance: The Afterlife of Ancient Egypt in Early Modern Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 3.

178 Curran, B. *The Egyptian Renaissance: The Afterlife of Ancient Egypt in Early Modern Italy*, 3.

179 Curran, B. *The Egyptian Renaissance: The Afterlife of Ancient Egypt in Early Modern Italy,* 89.

accompanying woodblock prints, can be considered the fullest expression of the Egyptian revival during the Renaissance. The renewed interest in Ancient Egypt coincided with the broader humanist interest in classical philosophy and in recovering the wisdom of the Ancient world. Through this process, Egypt began to be perceived as the cradle of wisdom. This was not necessary a new notion; as early as the twelfth century, Christian philosophers were praising the wisdom of the ancient Egyptians. German bishop and chronicler Otto Von Freising writes:

> We read that in Egypt there was such great wisdom that, as Plato states, the Egyptians called the philosophers of the Greeks childish and immature. Moses, also the giver of the law…was not ashamed to be instructed by Egyptian wisdom…[T]hus the careful student of history will find that learning transferred from the Egyptians with the Greeks, then to the Romans…[180]

However, despite these such accounts from the medieval period discussing Ancient Egypt's influence on Greek and Roman thought, it was not until the rise of Neoplatonism, which reconciled Classical philosophy with Christian doctrine, that the wisdom of Ancient Egypt began to be widely recognized.[181]

The extensive use of Egyptian imagery in the Borgia ceiling frescoes sought to associate Alexander with ancient Egypt's learned culture. Alexander's association with classical mythos and thought is re-enforced by the Roman imagery in both the ceiling frescoes and those depicting the lives of the saints. This seamless intersection of secular and sacred imagery formed a powerful epideictic argument about Alexander that would not have been lost on the learned visitors that would have frequented the room.

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180 Karl Henry. Dannenfeldt, *The Renaissance, Medieval or Modern?*(Harrap: Heath, 1959), 60-61.

181 Curran, B. *The Egyptian Renaissance: The Afterlife of Ancient Egypt in Early Modern Italy*, 91.

APIS AND THE BORGIA BULL

The bull repeatedly depicted Pinturicchio's ceilings frescoes in the Sala dei Santi was a creature derived from Egyptian mythology. The sacred bull, which the Egyptians referred to as Hep and which the Greeks renamed Apis, was first worshipped in the Memphis region of Egypt during the Second Dynasty (c. 2890-2686 BCE).[182] The Apis bull, considered the reincarnation of the all-powerful god Osiris, was believed to be the intermediary between that god and mankind.[183] The Apis bull was the most important of all the sacred animals in Egyptian mythology, and its significance only increased over time. Indeed, much of what we know comes from Greco-Roman writers. According to Arrian, a Greek historian, Apis was one of the gods to whom Alexander the Great sacrificed during the seizure of Persia.[184] The Apis bull also appeared intermittently in Greek and Roman art. Consider this depiction of the Apis bull from a sarcophagus in Alexandria (fig. 53). Though it was executed in what we may understand as an "Egyptianizing" style, a statue of Hadrian located elsewhere in the tomb identified it as an object from the Roman epoch.[185]

The Apis bull was chosen to represent the god Osiris and quite often the pharaohs because it symbolized a courageous heart, great strength, and a fighting spirit, all qualities attributed to kingship.[186] Pharaohs also liked to think of themselves as mighty

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182 E.A. Wallis Budge, *Egyptian Magic* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Legacy Reprints, 1901), 26.
183 Budge, E.A.W. *Egyptian Magic*, 26.
184 N. G. L. Hammond, *Sources for Alexander the Great: An Analysis of Plutarch's Life and Arrian's Anabasis Alexandrou* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 57.
185 J.-Y. Empereur, *Alexandrie redecouverte. Librairie Artheme Fayard*. Paris 1998.
186 Budge, E.A.W.*Gods of the Egyptians*, 25.

bulls when riding their chariots into battle.[187] Whatever opposition was not trampled under their powerful hooves was destroyed by their fearsome horns.[188]

The Borgia ceiling frescoes seek to attribute all these connotations to Alexander and his papacy. They depict, in detail, the rather complicated narrative of Osiris and the Apis bull, which begins with the god Osiris teaching Egyptians to plow the field and cultivate the vine (figs. 22,23) After Osiris is killed and his body buried (fig. 24), the Apis bull appeared as a re-incarnation of the god (fig. 25), and the bull was then worshipped. This idea was perhaps one of the most important for the visual argument the Borgia frescoes endeavored to make. The Apis bull was venerated for expressing the divine in earthly form. In the frescoes, the Apis bull would have been understood by viewers to represent the Borgia bull, drawing a parallel between Alexander and Apis; like the Egyptian bull, Alexander was the intercessor between the earthly and the divine. This parallel emphasized this crucial facet of the papacy, and sought to establish through association the idea that God chose Alexander, and God spoke through him. As I will discuss later in this chapter, this sentiment is reinforced by the wall frescoes in the same room depicting the saints and biblical figures.

The bull had connotations beyond Osiris and Egyptian mythology; it was also linked to the founding of Ancient Rome. According to Plutarch and other historians, Romulus used a bull to pull the plow that demarcated the sacred boundaries of Rome. Plutarch writes:

> And the founder Romulus put a bronze blade on his plough, yoked a bull and a cow, and himself drove them on, drawing a deep furrow around the

187 Budge, E.A.W. *Gods of the Egyptians*, 26.
188 Budge, E.A.W.*Gods of the Egyptians*, 26.

> boundary…It was with this line that they marked out the course of the wall…"[189]

As Brian Curran points out, the connection between the bull and the founding of Ancient Rome would not have been lost on learned Renaissance viewers.[190] The connection between the Borgia bull and Romulus is most explicit in *Osiris Teaching the Egyptians The Use of the Plow* (fig. 22). The two large bulls the Egyptians are using to cultivate the field evoke the oxen Romulus used to demarcate the sacred boundaries of Rome. In the same panel that depicts the use of the plow, Pinturicchio also included a plaque above Osiris's throne inscribed with the letters SPQR, an obvious reference to Classical Rome (fig 54). Poeschel and Parks have both argued that this inclusion seemed to substantiate the argument the fresco is alluding to the founding of Rome.[191]

The connection between the Romulan ox and the Borgia bull was one that Alexander had exploited before. For his coronation in 1492, Alexander commissioned a ceremonial golden ox to be paraded through the city with him as he made his way to St. Peter's. Alexander included a Latin inscription heralding his connection to the Romulus on the figure's base. It read, "Rome had discovered the ox when she was founded with the ploughshare. Now in decay she is reborn through the ox."[192] Through the bull, Alexander was able transcend his Spanish heritage and establish a lineage from Romulus to himself, legitimizing his role as secular leader of Rome.

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189 Mary Beard, John North, and S. R. F. Price, *Religions of Rome*, vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 94.

190 Curran, Brian A. *The Egyptian Renaissance: The Afterlife of Ancient Egypt in Early Modern Italy,* 112.

191 Parks, N. Randolph. "On The Meaning Of Pinturicchio's Sala Dei Santi." , 298 and Sabine Poeschel, "Age Itaque Alexander - Die Sala Dei Santi Des Appartamento Borgia Und Die Erwartungen an Alexander VI.,"*Römisches Jahrbuch Für Kunstgeschichte* 25 (1989): 155-56.

192 Fritz Saxl, "The Appartamento Borgia," in *Lectures*, vol. 1 (London: Warburg Institute, 1957), 181.

The interchangeability of the Borgia family emblem with both the Apis Bull and the Romulan Ox in Pinturicchio's frescoes offered Alexander a very strong classical foundation for the visual statement he was making about himself as a leader. However, as pope, Alexander's message had to ultimately be Christian in tone, and the ceiling frescoes did not fail to address the recurring theme of Christian triumph. The iconographic program reconciles the pagan story of Osiris and the Apis Bull with Christian doctrine by including conquering heroes from the Old Testament. In *Osiris Teaching the Egyptians The Use of the Plow*, a small depiction of Judith appears at the top, Holofernes's head in one hand and her triumphant sword in the other (fig. 55). *Osiris Teaching Egyptians to Gather Fruit* features the David above the throne of Osiris, Goliath's head tucked under his arm (fig. 56). As Brian Curran points out, these Biblical heroes appear in lieu of scenes of Osiris as a soldier and conqueror, heralding the ultimate triumph of Christianity over the pagan world.[193] In synthesizing the Apis and Romulan narratives with the Old Testament heroes, the iconography of the Sala reconciles Alexander's mythological lineage with his role as God's earthly representative. This blending of Pagan and Christian traditions would have resonated with Renaissance viewers.

ALEXANDER AND THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS

As with the Apis narrative on the ceiling, the wall frescoes blended both sacred and secular iconography to portray Alexander as a descendant of Classical traditions of the ancient world and as a figure who, like the saints, was chosen by God. As I have mentioned, both Parks and Poeschel have argued that saints depicted were

193 Curran, B. *The Egyptian Renaissance: The Afterlife of Ancient Egypt in Early Modern Italy*, 113.

linked through their direct interaction with God. Alexander was thus making a similar suggestion about himself, intimating that he too was chosen by God to spread the Christian faith, and like the saints, he would be protected by God from his enemies. This was topical, given the hostile political environment in Rome and the vocal opposition Alexander faced from Cardinal della Rovere and others. It was also important Alexander assert himself as a defender of the Christian faith in a time when the Christian world was engaged in an ongoing fight against the Muslims.

However, many of the frescoes also made references to the ancient world and its associated wisdom, once again alluding to Alexander figure endowed with power of the Ancient World. The first and perhaps most subtle reference to antiquity is in *Visit of Saint Anthony of Egypt to Saint Paul the Hermit in the Desert* (fig. 17). In addition to a receiving one hundred years of food in the desert from a raven sent by God,[194] Brian Curran notes that Saint Paul and Saint Anthony were the founders of Egyptian monasticism, providing another connection between Alexander and the wisdom associated with Ancient Egypt.[195]

The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian (fig. 21), which is the second most prominent fresco in the room after *The Disputation of Saint Catherine of Alexandria* on the opposite wall (fig. 16), makes more overt references to the ancient world, providing links to Imperial Rome as well as the city of Alexandria and its namesake, Alexander the Great. In the foreground of the fresco Saint Sebastian stands tied to a post, his tormentors firing arrows at his already ravaged form. Sebastian, who survived the wounds he received through divine intervention, thus provided one of the most powerful examples of

194 David Hugh. Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 393.
195 Curran, B. *The Egyptian Renaissance: The Afterlife of Ancient Egypt in Early Modern Italy*,109.

a figure who was directly protected by God. However, the Colosseum and the Palatine Hill, clearly visible in the background, also make reference to the enduring strength of Imperial Rome.

This interplay of Christian and classical iconography continued to promote Alexander's dual ideological lineage. The Roman ruins also created an important link that ultimately lead back to the most important fresco in the room, *The Disputation of Saint Catherine of Alexandria.* Rome was considered to Western counterpart to the Egyptian capital of Alexandria, which the Borgia frescoes summarily suggest to be the ultimate seat of Classical power and wisdom. The reference to Imperial Rome in *The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian* is echoed in *The Disputation* by the prominent triumphal arch, clearly modeled after the Arch of Constantine, which is topped with a Borgia bull. The arch, like the majority of The Sala dei Santi's iconography, has both secular and sacred implications.

The cult of Saint Catherine had grown extremely popular by the end of the Quattrocento, and given the subject matter, was often linked to the crusades.[196] Catherine represented the triumph of Christianity over paganism, and though she argues the merits of Christianity before Maxentius, a Roman emperor, in the narrative, Pinturicchio deliberately outfitted the emperor and his advisors in Turkish garments in the Borgia fresco. As Cynthia Stollhan's points out in her book *St. Catherine of Alexandria in Italian Renaissance Art,* Catherine's costume is similarly suggestive, for although she was from Alexandria, she is dressed in fifteenth century clothing that would not have been out of

196 Cynthia Stollhans, *St. Catherine of Alexandria in Renaissance Roman Art: Case Studies in Patronage*, 80.

place in Alexander's Rome.[197] This anachronistic detail help contemporize Catherine's narrative, making her the symbol of the contemporary Catholic fight against the Muslims. This allowed Alexander to suggest through association that like Catherine, he was a Christian champion who triumphed against barbarism by the grace of God.

In a more secular sense, Catherine was an important figure to Alexander because she was the patron saint of Alexandria, a seat of Classical wisdom and strength established by Alexander the Great. Upon his coronation, Borgia chose the name Alexander for the very purpose of fostering the connection between himself and Alexander the Great, and this connection was not lost on the Renaissance elite. As Pastor notes, upon his election, Alexander was often compared to the great men of Antiquity. Pastor quotes a distich written about Alexander at his coronation, which reads, "Rome was great under Caesar, greater far under Alexander, The first was only a mortal, but the latter is a God."[198] Alexander was thus a new Caesar and the successor of Alexander the Great, and as pope he was able to realize his namesake's ambition of conquering Rome. In this sense, the triumphal arch in the center of *The Disputation* heralds his political victory as much as it represents the Christian victory over the Muslims.

For these reasons, *The Disputation* was a fitting subject to symbolize Alexander's role as both leader of the Christian world and an embodiment of Imperial power. However, *The Disputation* also harkens back to the prominence of oratorical practice in Renaissance Rome. In the narrative, Catherine causes a mass conversion by delivering what we may conceive of as a *genus deliberativum*, or an oration that sought to

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197 Stollhans, C, *St. Catherine of Alexandria in Renaissance Roman Art: Case Studies in Patronage*, 81

198 Pastor, Ludwig. *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages. Drawn from the Secret Archives of the Vatican and Other Original Sources*. Edited by Frederick Ignatius Antrobus. Vol. V., 390.

persuade. She did so successfully, convincing Maxentius's wife and all his advisors to convert to Christianity. This act of persuasion is emphasized in Pinturicchio's frescoes, where Catherine stands ticking the points of her arguments off on her fingers in a gesture Renaissance viewers would have recognized and understood. Amidst the visual statements the frescoes make about Alexander's political and divinely appointed power, the cycle also suggests that he was a man of great erudition who, like Catherine, was blessed with the ability to persuade others of the righteousness of his endeavors.

The Disputation synthesizes what the Apis narrative on the ceiling as well as the other wall frescoes implied about Alexander, ultimately making a powerful statement about him that would not have failed to impress visitors who came to the Sala seeking an audience. This statement would have been reinforced by the sophisticated style of the room discussed at length in Chapter Two. The more erudite viewers would likely have understood the significance of the style and appreciated the way in which it lent itself to being read like an epideictic oration, a spectacle meant to impress. Even those who were less familiar with rhetorical theory would have overwhelmed by the sheer splendor of the Sala. Combined with the well-designed iconographic program, the Sala's visual argument would have been easily understood and highly effective in exciting emotion within the viewer. We may understand this to be to true power of Pinturicchio's Borgia frescoes and a fitting representation of Alexander's pontificate and legacy.

Figures

Figure 1. Sano di Pietro. *The Virgin Mary Appears to Pope Calixtus III*, 1456. Tempera on panel. Pinacoteca nazionale di Siena

Figure 2. Joos van Gent, *Pope Calixtus III*, c. 1475. Oil on canvas, 1.16 x 0.56 m. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

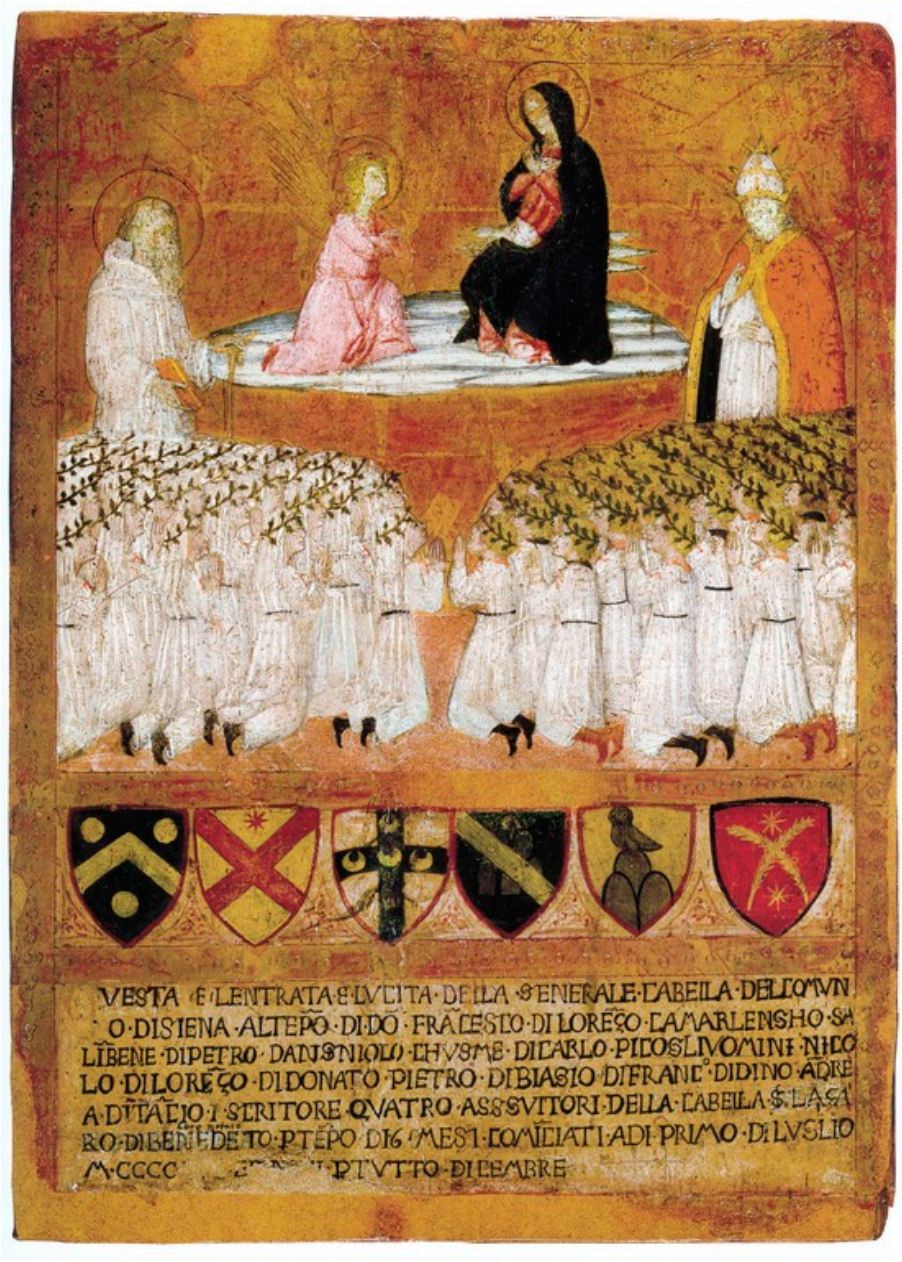

Figure 3. Tavoletta di Gabella: Cover for a Register of Camerlengo Don Francesco di Lorenco, 1456. Tempra on panel, 432x316mm. Archivo di Stato, Siena.

Figure 4. Pinturicchio, *The Disputation of Saint Catherine of Alexandria, detail*. 1492-1494. Fresco. La Sala dei Santi, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

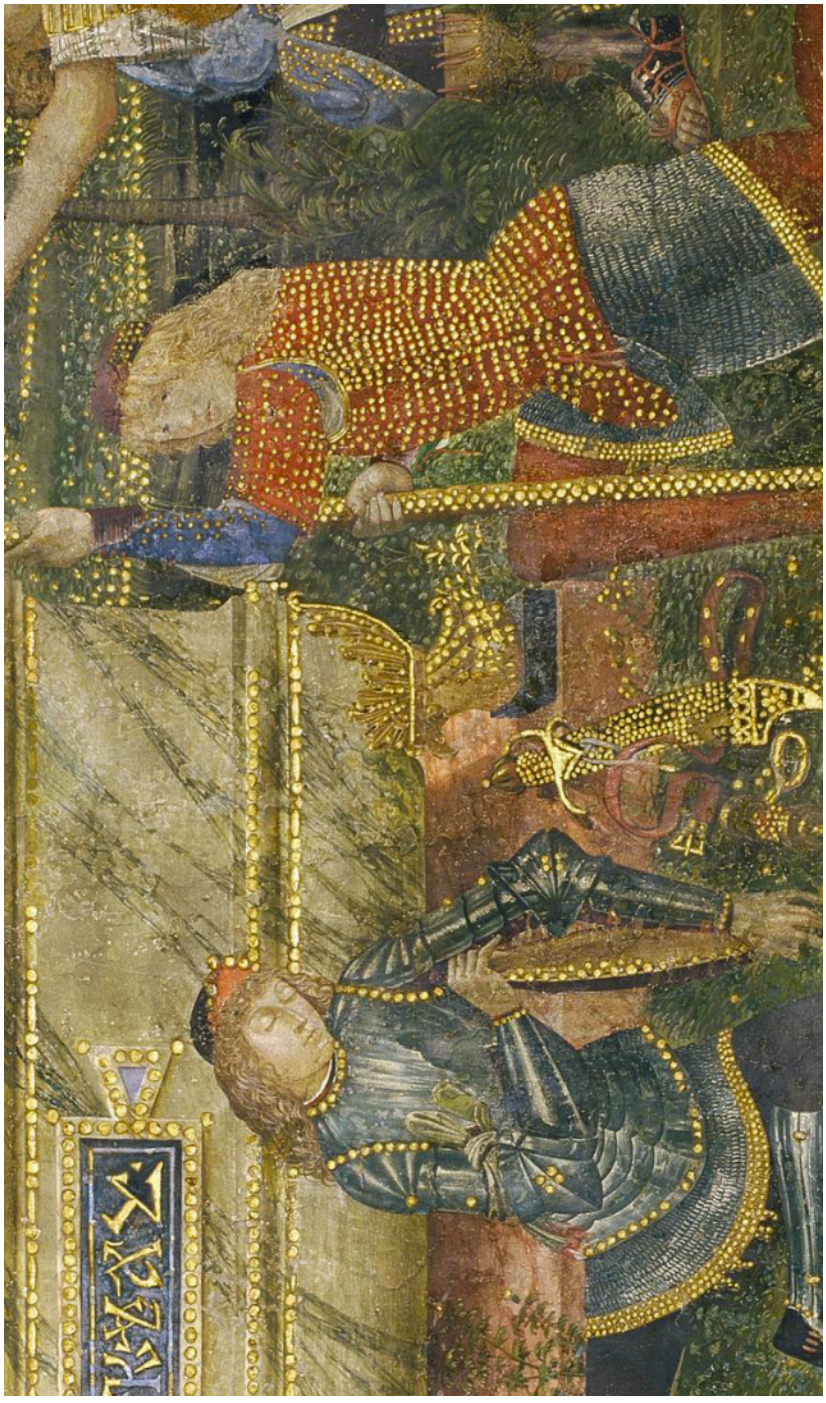

Figure 5. Pinturicchio, *The Resurrection, detail*. 1492-1494. Fresco. La Sala dei Misteri, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

Figure 6. Pinturicchio, *The Resurrection, detail*. 1492-1494. Fresco. La Sala dei Misteri, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

Figure 7. Unnamed Spanish School Artist, *Portrait of Alexander IV*. 1492. Oil on panel, Pinacoteca Vaticana, Vatican City.

Figure 8. Pinturicchio. Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints Augustine, Francis, Anthony of Padua and a Holy Monk, 1480s. Basso della Rovere Chapel, Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome.

Figure 9. Pinturicchio, *Music*, 1492-1494. Fresco. La Sala dei Arti Liberali, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

Figure 10. Pinturicchio. *Daniel and Erythraean Sibyl*, 1492-1494. Fresco. La Sala dei Sibelle, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

Figure 11. Pinturicchio. *Grammar,* 1492-1494. La Sala dei Arti Liberali, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

Figure 12. Pinturicchio. *Geometry,* 1492-1494. Fresco. La Sala dei Arti Liberali, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

Figure 13. Pinturicchio. *Rhetoric*, 1492-1494. Fresco. La Sala dei Arti Liberali, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

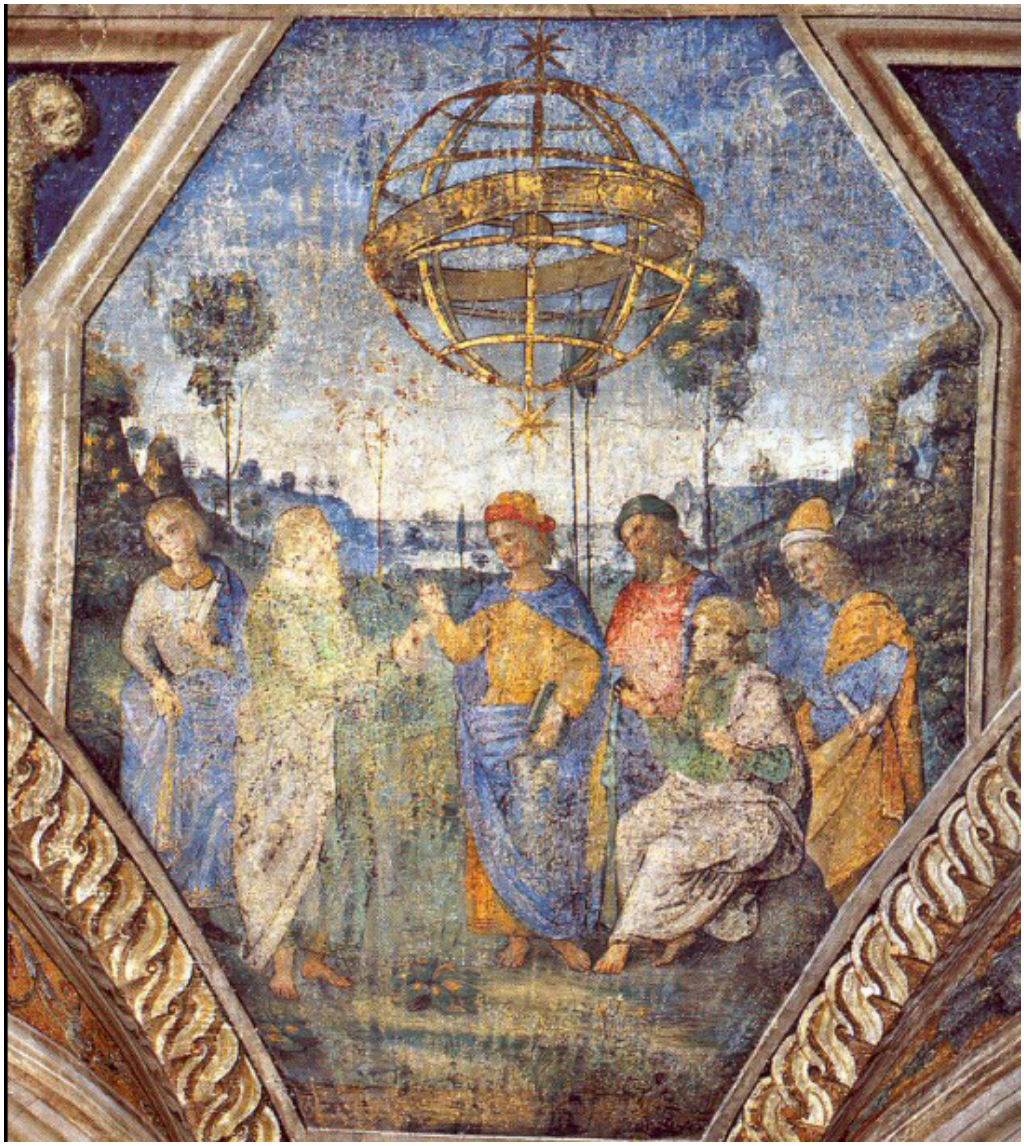

Figure 14. Pinturicchio. *Astronomy,* 1492-1494. Fresco. La Sala dei Arti Liberali, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

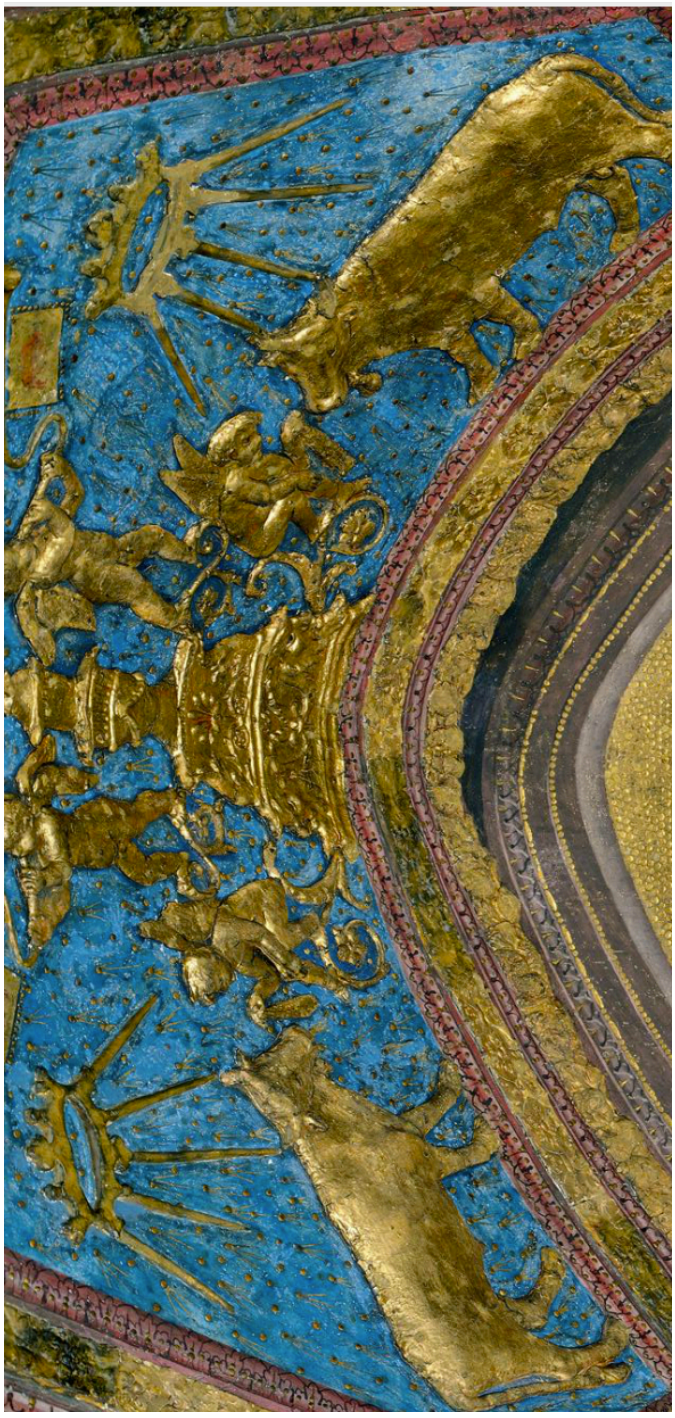

Figure 15. Pinturicchio, *La Sala dei Arti Liberali, ceiling detail,* 1492-1494. Fresco with plaster and gold leaf. La Sala dei Arti Liberali, Borgia Apartments, Vatican Palace.

Figure 16. Pinturicchio, *The Disputation of Saint Catherine of Alexandria,* 1492-1494. Fresco. La Sala dei Santi, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

Figure 17. Pinturicchio, *Visit of Saint Antony of Egypt to Saint Paul the Hermit in the Desert*, 1492-1494. Fresco. La Sala dei Santi, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

Figure 18. Pinturicchio, *The Visitation*, 1492-1494. Fresco. La Sala dei Santi, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

Figure 19. Pinturicchio, *Saint Barbara Escaping from the Tower,* 1492-1494. Fresco, La Sala dei Santi. Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

Figure 20. Pinturicchio, *Susanna and the Elders*,1492-1494. Fresco. La Sala dei Santi, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

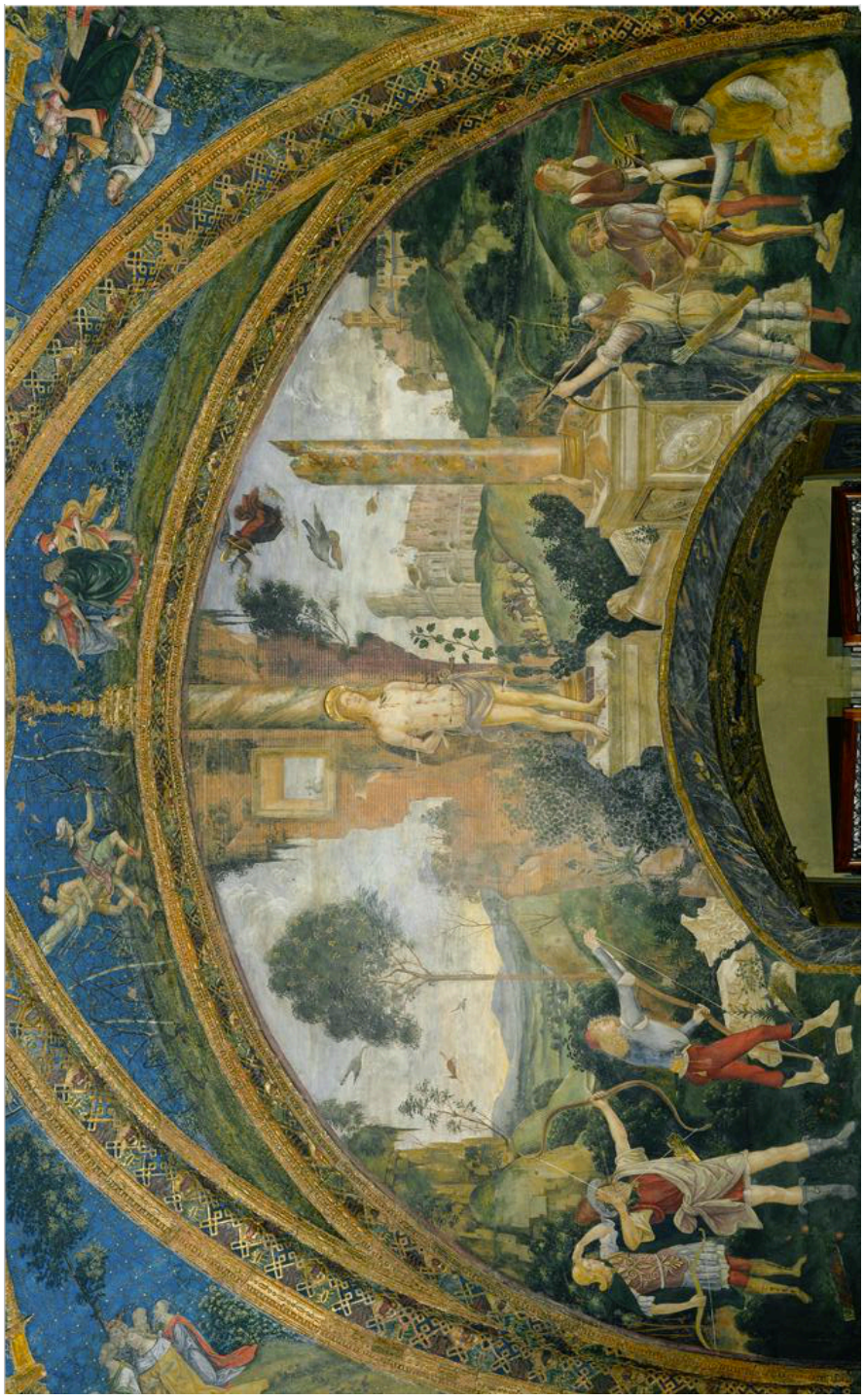

Figure 21. Pinturicchio, *The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian*,1492-1494. Fresco. La Sala dei Santi, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

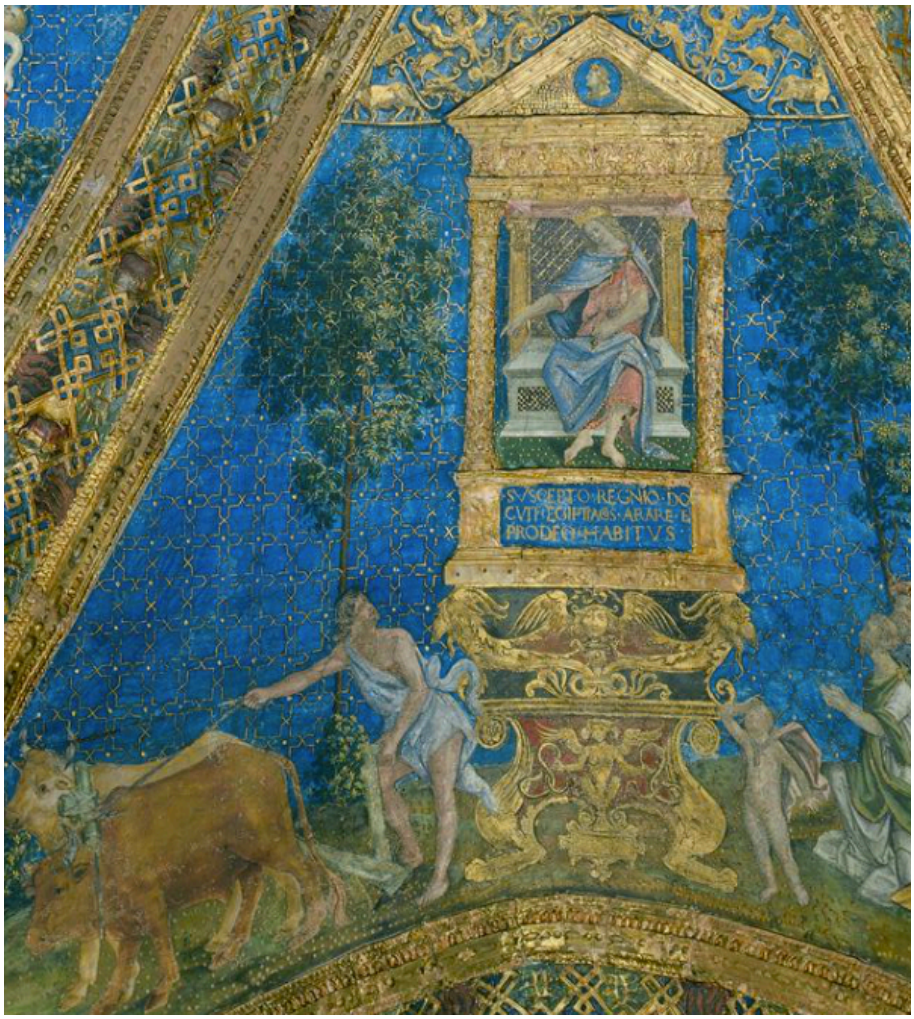

Figure 22. Pinturicchio, *Osiris Teaching Egyptians to Use The Plow*,1492-1494. Ceiling fresco with plaster and gold leaf. La Sala dei Santi, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

Figure 23. Pinturicchio, *Osiris Teaching Egyptians to Cultivate the Vine*,1492-1494. Ceiling fresco with plaster and gold leaf. La Sala dei Santi, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

Figure 24. Pinturicchio, *The Burial of Osiris*, 1492-1494. Ceiling fresco with plaster and gold leaf. La Sala dei Santi, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

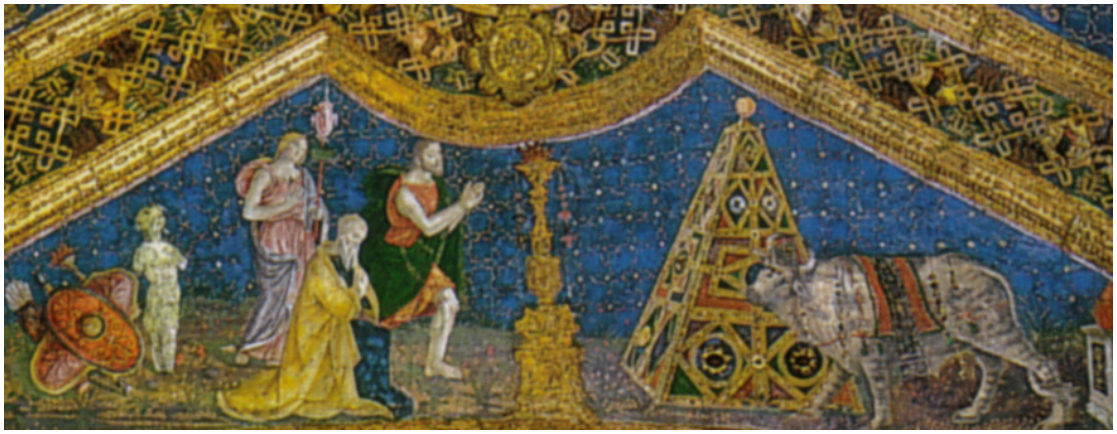

Figure 25. Pinturicchio, *The Appearance of The Apis Bull*, 1492-1494. Ceiling fresco with plaster and gold leaf. La Sala dei Santi, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

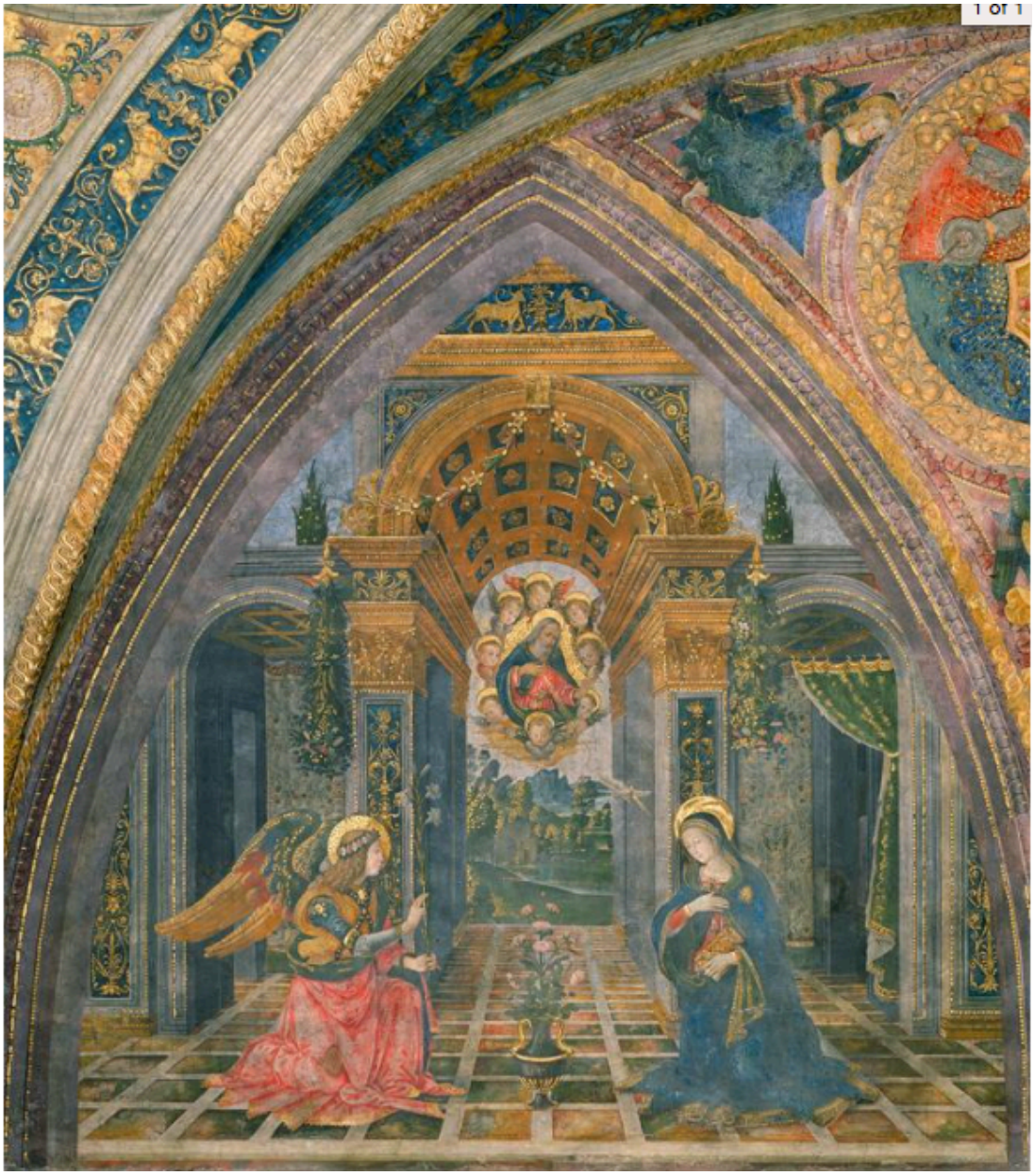

Figure 26. Pinturicchio, *The Annunciation*,1492-1494. Fresco. La Sala dei Santi, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

Figure 27. Pinturicchio, The Nativity, 1492-1494. Fresco. La Sala dei Misteri, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

Figure 28. Pinturicchio, *The Adoration of the Magi*, 1492-1494. Fresco. La Sala dei Misteri, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

Figure 29. Pinturicchio, *The Resurrection*, 1492-1494. Fresco. La Sala dei Misteri, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

Figure 30. Pinturicchio, *The Ascension*, 1492-1494. Fresco. La Sala dei Misteri, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

Figure 31. Pinturicchio, *The Descent of the Holy Spirit*, 1492-1494. Fresco. La Sala dei Misteri, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

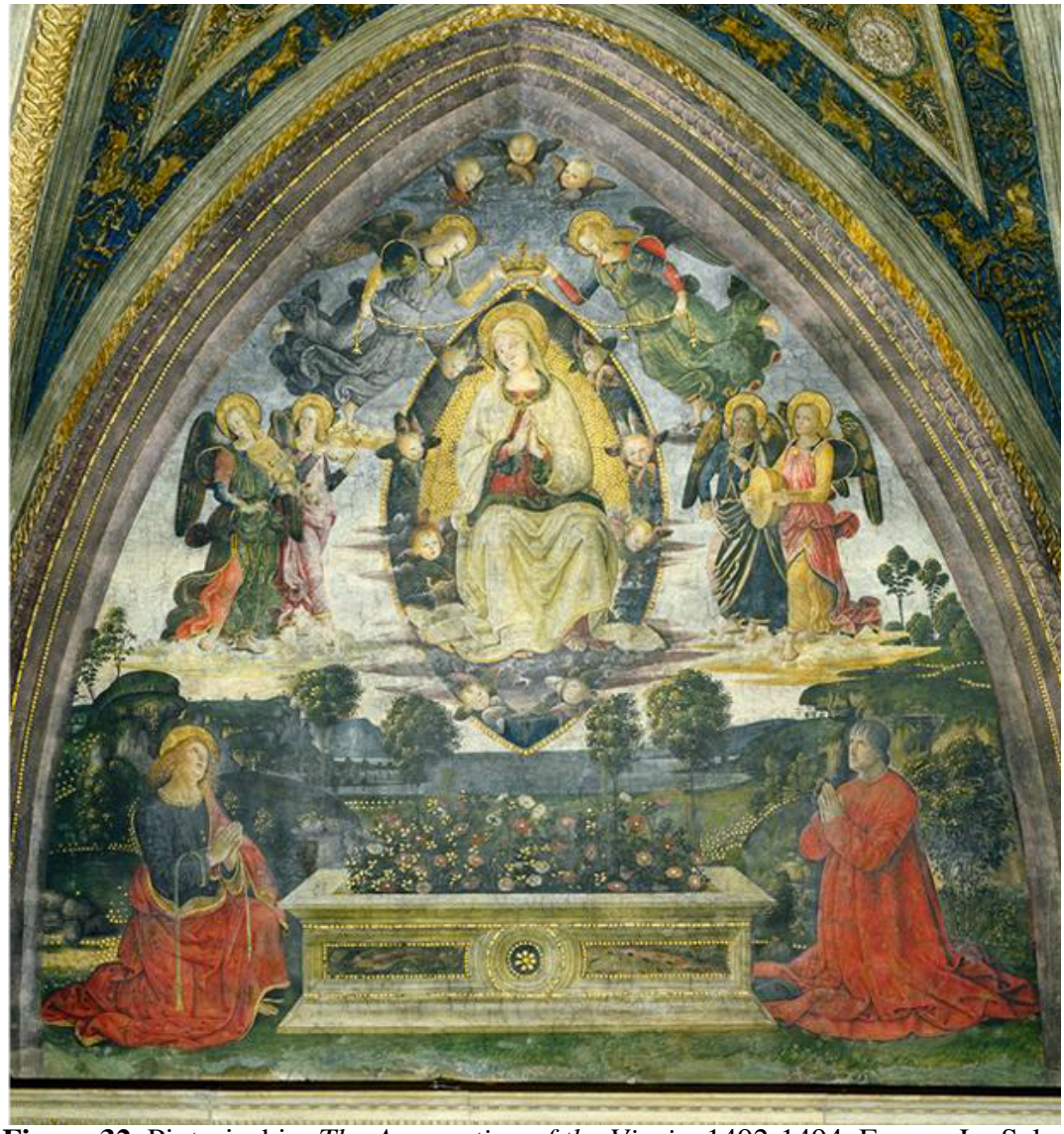

Figure 32. Pinturicchio, *The Assumption of the Virgin*, 1492-1494. Fresco. La Sala dei Misteri, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

Figure 33. Fra Angelico and his workshop, including Benozzo Gozzoli, *The Ordination of Saint Lawrence*,1448. Fresco, Niccoline Chapel, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

Figure 34. Fra Angelico and his workshop, including Benozzo Gozzoli, *The Coronation of the Virgin*, 1440-1441. Fresco, 184 x 164 cm. Museo di San Marco, Florence, Italy.

Figure 35. Melozzo da Forlí, *Pope Sixtus IV Naming Bartolomeo Platina Prefect of the Vatican Library*, 1474. Fresco, detached, transferred to canvas, 400 x 300 cm. Pinacoteca Vaticana, Vatican City.

Figure 36. Sandro Botticelli, The Punishment of Korah, 1480-1482. Fresco, 345x555 cm. Sistine Chapel, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

Figure 37. Filippino Lippi, *Annunciation with Saint Thomas Aquinas Presenting Cardinal Carafa to the Virgin*, 1489-1493. Carafa Chapel, Santa Maria sopra Minerva, Rome, Italy.

Figure 38. Bartolomeo di Tommaso, *The Martyrdom of Saint Barbara,* 1440s. Fresco. Museo pinacoteca comunale, Foligno, Italy.

Figure 39. Pinturicchio. Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints Augustine, Francis, Anthony of Padua and a Holy Monk, detail, 1480s. Basso della Rovere Chapel, Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome.

Figure 40. Pinturicchio, *The Funeral of San Bernardino*, 1483-1484. Fresco. Bufalini Chapel, Church of the Aracoeli, Rome, Italy.

Figure 41. Pinturicchio, *Dispute with the Doctors*, 1501. Fresco. Baglioni Chapel, Collegiate church of Santa Maria Maggiore, Spello, Italy.

Figure 42. Perugino, *Christ Giving the Keys to Saint Peter*, 1480-1482. Fresco, 350 x 570 cm. Sistine Chapel, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

Figure 43. Gentile da Fabriano, *Adoration of the Magi*, 1423. Tempera on wood, 300 x 282 cm. Uffizi, Florence.

Figure 44. Pisanello, *Saint George and the Princess*, 1436-1438. Fresco, Pellegrini Chapel, Sant'Anastasia, Verona, Italy.

Figure 45. *Rome of the Landscapes,* 64-69 A.D. Fourth style fresco, Domus Aurea, Golden House of Nero, Rome, Italy.

Figure 46. Masaccio, The Holy Trinity, 1427. Fresco, 667 x 317 cm. Santa Maria Novella, Florence, Italy.

Figure 47. Pinturicchio, *Susanna and the Elders*, *detail*, 1492-1494. Fresco. La Sala dei Santi, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

Figure 48. Pinturicchio, painted *grotteschi* detail from the Domenico della Rovere chapel, 1480s. Domenico della Rovere chapel, Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome, Italy**.**

Figure 49. Raphael, *Eight Scenes from Roman History and Mythology by Sodema*, 1508-1511. Ceiling fresco. Stanza della Segnatura, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

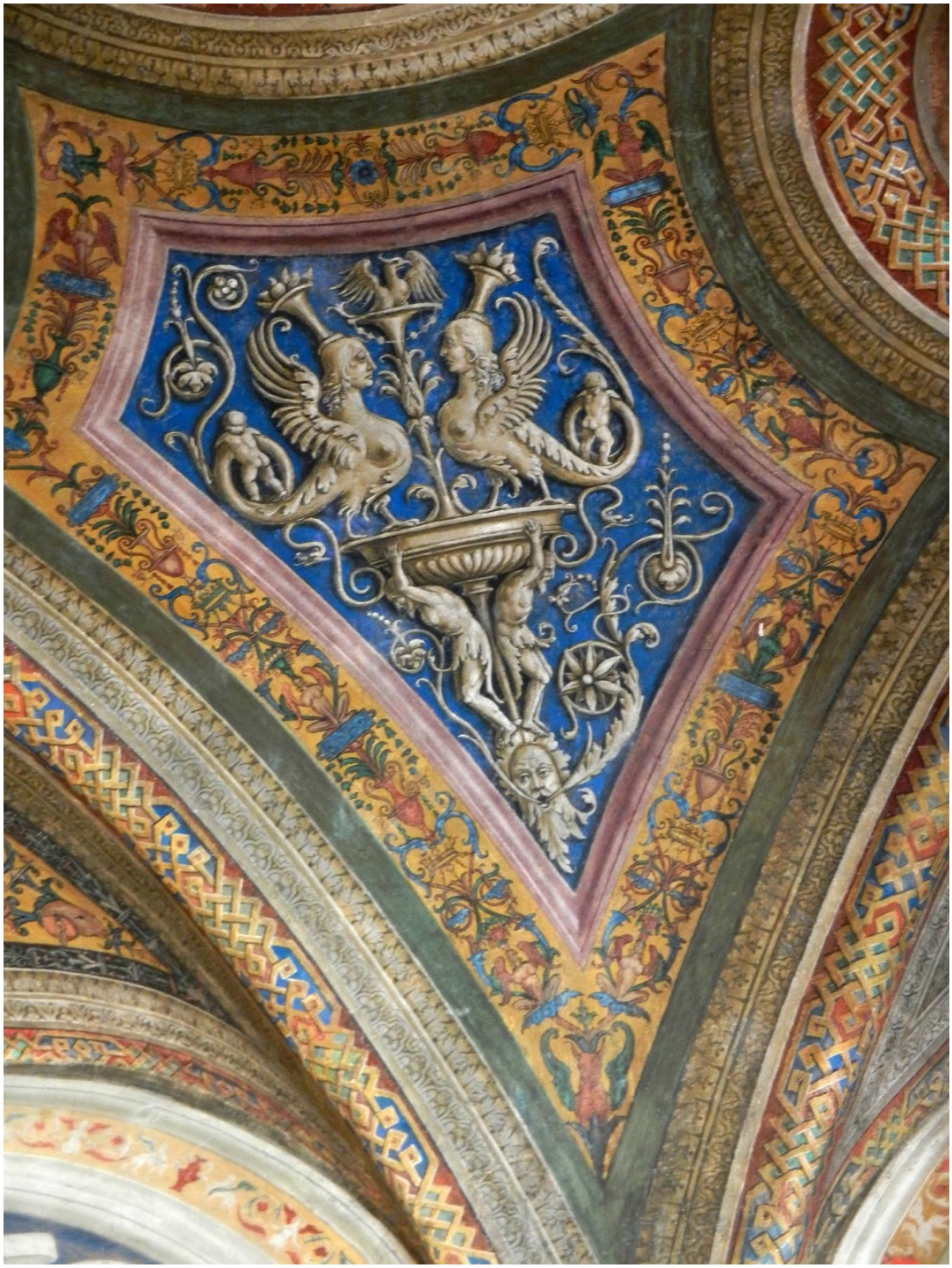

Figure 50. Pinturicchio, *grotteschi ornamentation*, 1492-1494. Ceiling fresco. La Sala dei Santi, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

Figure 51. Cosimo Rosselli, *Adoration of the Golden Calf*, 141-1483. Fresco. Sistine Chapel, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

Figure 52. Fra Angelico, *Coronation of the Virgin*, 1430-1432. Tempera on wood, 2.09 x 2.06 m. Museé du Louvre, Paris, France.

Figure 53. *Adoration of the Apis Bull*, sarcophagus niche in the chamber of the principle tomb, First Century A.D. Sandstone relief. Catacombs at Kom el-Chougafa, Alexandria, Egypt.

Figure 54. Pinturicchio, *Osiris Teaching Egyptians to Use The Plow*, *detail*. 1492-1494. Ceiling fresco with plaster and gold leaf. La Sala dei Santi, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

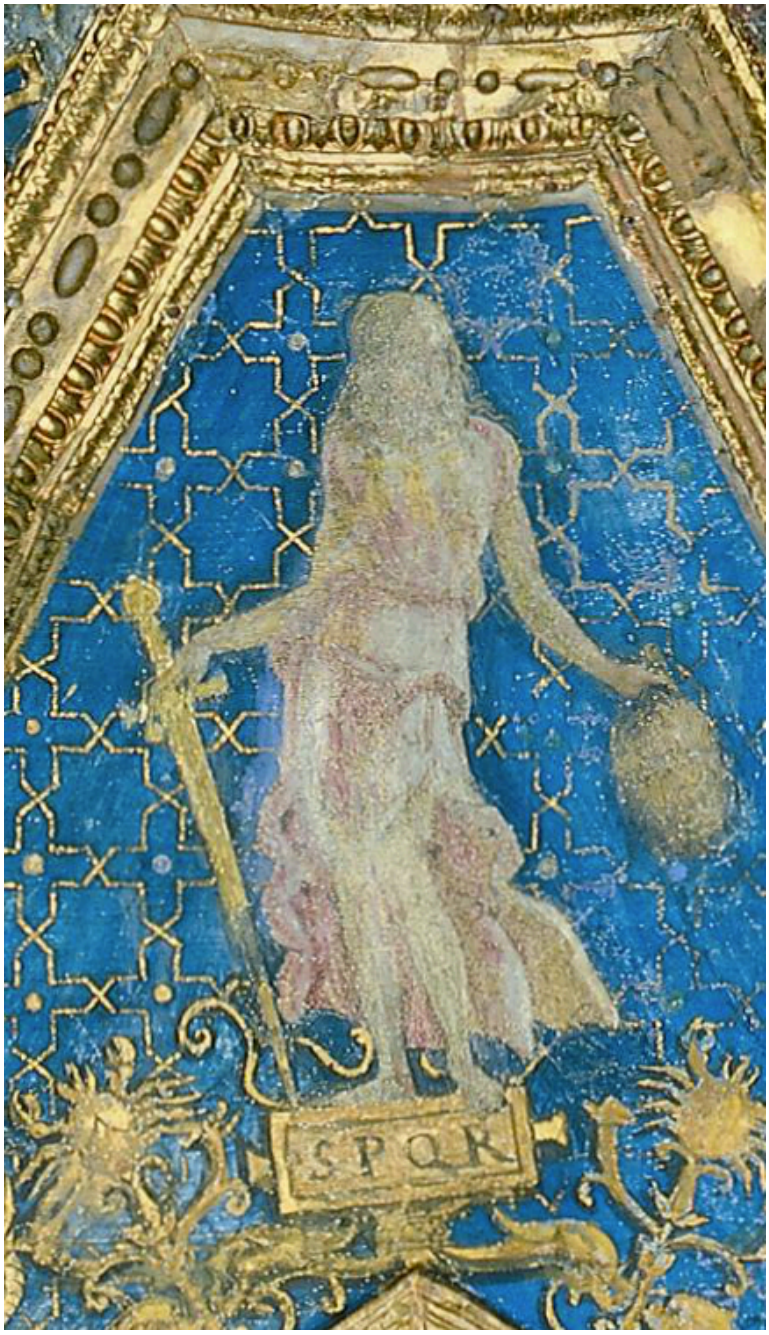

Figure 55. Pinturicchio, *Osiris Teaching Egyptians to Use The Plow*, *detail*. 1492-1494. Ceiling fresco with plaster and gold leaf. La Sala dei Santi, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

Figure 56. Pinturicchio, *Osiris Teaching Egyptians to Cultivate the Vine*,1492-1494. Ceiling fresco with plaster and gold leaf. La Sala dei Santi, Appartamento Borgia, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

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